A FRENCH MOTHER IN WAR TIME

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BEING THE JOURNAL OF
MADAME EDOUARD DRUMONT

TRANSLATED BY
GRACE E. BEVIR

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EDWARD ARNOLD
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NOTE

CLOSE as our relations with France have been of late years, it is still very hard for most English people to grasp the mentality of the French nation, and fully to understand the point of view from which a French person looks at passing events. It has therefore been thought that a translation of this Journal of Madame Drumont, the wife of the well-known editor of the *Libre Parole*, might be of interest to English readers, as giving them such an insight.

The Journal speaks for itself, and needs no comment, but it may be useful to state that M. Drumont is an Imperialist in politics, and that Paul, who figures so largely, is Madame Drumont's son by a former marriage.

INTRODUCTION

By EDOUARD DRUMONT

In spite of the state of my health, I am delighted to write the few lines for which I have been asked as a preface to this volume.

When I lived at Soisy-sous-Étiolles, where were spent the few hours of happiness that I have known in my life, the young hero who to-day is facing the greatest dangers with valiant cheerfulness was growing up under my eyes.

I used to correct his translations and his exercises, and I must own that he did not take kindly to Latin and Greek.

To me he confided his earliest dreams and ambitions. He was always attracted by the lure of the Unknown, by the desire to "mingle with the universe," and he has at length realized his dreams, in spite of his mother's entreaties and fears. In fine, he was modern in the fullest acceptance of the word.

While he was still at school at Beauvais, he made with his own hands the first machine in which he was to soar through the air.

To the men of our time who are already weighed down with years, it is marvellous to see springing up

around them a race who are totally different to the men of their generation.

It will be absolutely astounding to those who have lived through these times to realize the transformations which have taken place around them.

As a writer I have been a keen and interested observer of the manners of our times, and who, I ask, would recognize the frivolous, shallow women, so passionately fond of dress and amusement, that I used to describe, in the splendid women of to-day who have given so many proofs of devotion to the sick and wounded ?

She who has written this book has been, like me, a faithful portrayer of the vagaries of fashion. Our readers will remember the sparkling articles in which she delighted to sketch its passing phases, how she made us see the shimmer of the silks, and gave us every detail of the toilettes for which our Parisians are unequalled. She foresaw no more than I did that these pleasure-lovers would become, when they had donned the nurse's cap, the devoted women whom we see lavishing so much care on the martyrs of war. Who would have thought that those devotees of the Tango, with their insatiable thirst for amusement, would have turned into the soldiers we now see at the front, always good-tempered under a constant rain of shells, and gaily facing all the trials and sufferings of a severe winter !

While as for the mothers who send their sons against the enemy and who encourage them to do their duty, who that saw the effeminate and sentimental way they brought them up would have expected them to rise to such heights of stoical heroism.

All this shows us that we should never despair, and that God gives to each century the heroines it needs.

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A FRENCH MOTHER IN WAR TIME

I.—PARIS

July, 1914.—I have just spent a week in Paris waiting for my son, who has been doing his three weeks' training on the frontier at Belfort. I am horrified at the rumours of war which are in the air. Not that I shrink from pain, for both my father and brother were soldiers. On my father's side I am of Lorraine. Every reason, therefore, to be vigorous, and love my country with all my might; but I am so afraid that my son will not have time to finish his military training before the crisis comes, and that I shall not see him again before the war—if there is a war. This idea preys on me day and night.

And yet they say that this war which everyone loathes is inevitable! Are butchery, frightfulness, pillage, and destruction inevitable?

It is incredible that well on in the twentieth century, with civilization at its height, such monstrous iniquity should be considered "inevitable."

I have spent this week of waiting in Paris, where

the feeling of feverish agitation which precedes great disasters pervades everything. The shops refuse to sell anything because they are afraid of not being able to get in fresh stock later on, everyone refuses notes, and will only take cash. The banks will give no change, and one rushes wildly about all over the place with notes for a thousand or a hundred francs in one's pocket, without being able to buy a single thing. During all this week I have been conscious of the mutterings of panic like the first rumbling of the thunder which precedes a great storm. I stay at home the whole time waiting for a wire to tell me that Paul was returning. My family gets on my nerves. I can't endure anyone. I can't bear listening to the commonplaces with which people try to hide their pessimistic thoughts.

My sister-in-law, my brother, and Pierre are starting for Granville to join my other brother, Major R.

I shall be glad to see them go and be alone for a while.

* * * * *

July.—I was on the balcony about two o'clock when a car stopped in front of the house. A sapper got out of it. I uttered a cry of jubilation—it was Paul! He came up and threw himself into my arms. I remained riveted to the spot, speechless and in tears.

"Oh, Mother, Mother, I did so want to see you

before the great upheaval. What luck! Well, I've seen you, and now I am ready to go when the bugle calls."

I could not speak; I was choking. I looked at this dear, big, handsome boy who is my only child, my whole life, whom I must give to France, must sacrifice perhaps to the inexorable laws of war. I felt my heart rise in revolt. I did not say anything, however, for he would have scolded me and it would have depressed him.

* * * * *

July.—Yesterday, when we were dining together, the telephone-bell rang. We both ran to it. It was a call from the Maison B.

" Is F. there ?"

" Yes."

" Ask him to come to the telephone at once."

I handed the receiver to my son, and saw that he was listening gravely and attentively. Then his face lighted up; he answered, and I guessed part of what was being said to him. I asked him:

" Is that B. ?"

" Yes, Mother; he is asking me to join a squadron of the Flying Corps. Six aeroplanes are to be taken to D.; when I get there I shall be given a commission. You see, I can't refuse."

" Yes, but before that what did he say to you—when you looked so serious ? There is going to be war, isn't there ?"

He pursed up his mouth, which is a familiar trick of his when he wishes to hide something from me.

"My dear Mother, you think everything points to war. It is quite possible that there will be war, in fact it's almost certain, but as long as they are not actually on the frontier and it is not declared, don't take such a jaundiced view of things, for goodness' sake. B. asks me to go to Douai to make some trial flights, that's all. I gave up flying because there were no openings for civilians, and I had met with endless disappointments and mortifications at the hands of those who should have helped and encouraged me. Now these same people have sent for me; my country needs me, I'm going into the Flying Corps, and I'm off. Cheer up! be pleased about it. I am so pleased to be going to be a bird again! Pack up my things, because I must be at Douai by three o'clock to-morrow. And don't worry—the English and the Russians are in with us. What a lark!"

And I thought: Alas! a poor sort of lark.

* * * * *

July.—Paul has gone, and I had scarcely had time to dry my eyes when I received his call to the colours, ordering him to go to Belfort as a member of the Flying Corps.

This time it's not much good telling me that there is not going to be war.

I did not know what to do about this order, but

decided to send my son a telegram. There were a hundred and fifty people at the telegraph office, standing in a queue which reached right out into the street. It was no good staying there. An obliging man who was at the head of it, just going to send his telegram, took mine. "You need not be anxious, Madame; I will send it off with mine."

I went home and thought I would try and telephone.

"The Grand Cerf Hotel at Douai?"

"Oh, Madame, I should not recommend you to ask for that; you will have to wait for at least two hours."

"No matter, I will wait. It's a message for a soldier who has got to go off, so do your best, Mademoiselle."

At last I got through.

"Is F. there?"

"No. He has just gone down to the aerodrome."

"Send an express messenger to tell him that his mobilization order has just arrived in Paris for him, and that he is to proceed immediately to Belfort. He will have to come back to-day. Tell him to ring me up and tell me what he is going to do."

"Very well, Madame, I will send someone at once."

I rang off, thankful to have got over that difficulty.

That meant he would not be going down to Dijon by aeroplane, and I wondered what he would do if he were sent into the firing-line at Belfort.

And I thought of Drumont, whom I had left at Les Sablons and was to have rejoined that evening. Could I leave him alone any longer? What a torture it was to be divided between one's husband and one's child!

The telephone-bell rang. It was a friend ringing up from Paris who said:

"Go off at once to join your husband. To-morrow war will be declared and your chauffeur will be taken, and then you won't be able to get away."

I was in despair and did not know what to do. I felt that my son might arrive at any minute, and that I might havegone and not be there to say good-bye to him. And this time I should be leaving Paris for good and all.

To have to leave Paris, the centre of everything, and not to see Paul again because duty calls me back to the country—my God, how cruel it is! The car will take me back to Les Sablons to-night.

* * * * *

II.—LES SABLONS

August.—The mobilization order came out yesterday, just as I was leaving Paris to join D. at Les Sablons.

The sight of the excitement in the villages, the women in tears standing spellbound before the tricolor notices, the mobilized men trudging off with their knapsacks and any sort of uniform, and young fellows singing the Marseillaise, upset me terribly.

On this scene of desolation the sun shone gloriously, indifferent to the troubles of this earth, and his rays even penetrated into the car and reached me as I sat huddled up in the corner, crying bitterly.

* * * * *

August.—The torture has begun. Yesterday evening D. was waiting for me when I arrived—knowing how upset I should be after parting with my son, he was anxious and sympathetic. We were both crying when we kissed each other.

Already we are without papers and without news. We rush after people who pass reading odd sheets, bought in neighbouring towns and full of vague rumours which are generally contradicted next day. My chauffeur has gone, and my staff of servants is

reduced to my Hindu and a charwoman. We often have a good cry together when we think of the beautiful country we lived in of yore, and are terrified at the thought of what may be in store for us here.

I am still without any news of Paul, and enduring the misery of not knowing where he is.

I particularly asked a soldier who was starting for Dijon to find out if F. the airman was there. But will he do it ?

The road to Fontainebleau passes this house, and all day long troops and horses go by, and men who have been called up and are joining their regiments, and cars bringing back others from their holidays to go to the front.

And already there is fighting on the frontier. Germany, like an octopus, has put out her tentacles to wrest from us our sons, our husbands, and our country. How monstrous a thing is war ! I could not, if I would, describe my thoughts and feelings, and who would dare to do so in the midst of such desolation !

The continuous stream flows out towards death—soldiers pass singing and shouting, " To Berlin !" Others go by in silence, fierce-looking, and determined.

The women make superhuman efforts not to cry

as they accompany them to the stations. Everything is well organized. Yesterday thirty trains went through at intervals of five minutes, all full of young men. Fontainebleau is in a ferment, so is Paris; they say that the principal hospital will be at Fontainebleau, and a whole nursing staff is being organized to attend to the first wounded who come in. A great many officers' wives have volunteered as nurses. They have put up hospital tents all round the station at Moret.

This morning I at last received news of my darling son. Alas! he has apparently been sent to Belfort. It seems the irony of fate that he who is so madly keen on aeroplanes should be sent to look after balloons, in which he takes no interest. However, Paul is brave and energetic, he is also fortunately devoid of the sort of recklessness which leads people to expose themselves uselessly. Drumont said to me the other day: " The sound common sense he inherits from you will be worth a fortune to him."

My dear boy's letter has stirred me to the very depths of my being. Day or night I will never part with the lock of his hair which we cut off just as he was going.

Since six o'clock this morning there has been an unending stream of horses and carts which have been mobilized. With incredible insolence the Germans have crossed the frontier before declaring war. Near

Belfort they have rounded up all the cattle. Their plan seems to be a sudden shattering attack which will cause a panic and bring the half-finished mobilization to a standstill.

I sat in a brown study brooding over all this news, whilst poor old Black, upset by his young master's absence, wandered forlornly round me.

* * * * *

August.—An anxious letter from Muncho—what an affectionate little thing she is, and she really does love my son, "our Paul," as she calls him. He has written to her, and she is delighted, though it is a delight largely mingled with pain.

I find on analyzing my feelings for my future daughter-in-law that I am not at all jealous of her, or afraid of any paltry rivalry between us in my son's affections. On the contrary, it seems to me that when there are two people to love him so much it should be a sort of protection to him.

* * * * *

August.—The mobilization goes on as before, everything planned with the same method and calmness, and carried out with the same keenness and good-humour.

The papers say that the Russians have broken into Germany at five different points, and that England is sending us 150,000 men to help us to defend our frontier.

What a relief this news is, and how hopeful it makes one! If only it is not contradicted to-morrow.

* * * * *

August.—Apparently they have violated Belgian neutrality, and the Belgian people are heroically disputing the passage through their territory. It has often been said that it was from there that they would try to invade us, and in spite of this, there is a rumour that our defences are weak in that direction. One lives in expectation.

People think that we shall enter Alsace-Lorraine, but there again there will be nothing but disillusion—the younger generation has inevitably grown up German in sympathy, and only the old people will be on our side—and then!

Now that the quiet of evening is falling, I am thinking more than ever of you my darling child. Where are you? What are you doing? Perhaps you are asleep. Sleep is certainly the best thing that can come to you in these troublous times. This morning I went into the drawing-room, and my eyes fell on your violin. I burst into tears and ran from the room.

What strength of mind and self-control one needs to hide one's feelings from other people.

The people here are stupid beyond words—perfect clods. In a moment of crisis like this they say the most idiotic things, emphasize—it is so like them—the danger in which the country finds itself, wonder

if we shall be beaten, and what will happen to prisoners in Germany, etc., etc. One feels inclined to throttle them or to stop one's ears so as not to hear. What idiots there are in this world!

The final irony of misery is having to go on with one's everyday life. There is no getting away from it, but the callous calm of the daily round jars horribly on the nerves, and by the evening one feels utterly crushed and exhausted.

* * * * *

August.—Belgium is putting up a heroic defence—what a debt we shall owe to her! What a hero her King is, and what a fine race of men! They are amazing us by their serenity under the most crushing and undeserved misfortunes, and the way in which, at a word from their sovereign, they are sacrificing themselves for the cause they believe to be right. Our gratitude must be as great as our admiration, and we shall not forget Mr. Asquith's pledge on behalf of the Allies never to sheathe the sword while a German remains in Belgium. We, the mothers of France, offer to their noble Queen, who does her duty with such dignity and simplicity, our homage and our boundless gratitude, a gratitude proportionate to the greatness of her sacrifice.

* * * * *

August.—I have had a letter from Belfort from my son telling me that it had taken him seventeen hours

to get from Paris to Belfort. There was indescribable enthusiasm in every place he passed through. The women were crying and laughing at the same time, as if they were mad, climbing up to the doors and decorating them with flowers, kissing the soldiers and filling the carriages with food and cigarettes. On all sides there were cheering and bravoes and cries of " à bas l'Allemagne," and " Vive la France "—in fact such scenes of enthusiasm as stimulate courage and awaken patriotism in hearts in which they seemed to be numb.

And now, after this long exciting journey, Paul is alone in Belfort, with nothing to do but to guard the balloons, when all the time he is dying to be in the fighting round the town. He says, " Sometimes the thought of you and of Her seems to hover over me like two great white birds on a dark plain. It is painful but exquisitely sweet, and I drive away these two birds because they unman me."

Ah ! my dear son, what a sorrow parting with you is !

* * * * *

August.—I was on the terrace at eight o'clock this morning. I had just drunk my tea when the garden gate opened and I saw our neighbour, Madame R., running towards me waving a paper. " We've had a victory ! The French are in Alsace ! There is the wildest enthusiasm, the Alsatians welcomed them

with open arms, tore up the posts on the frontier and helped them to drive the Germans out of Mulhouse." Her excitement was infectious, and we both had tears in our eyes. I thought of my father's love for Lorraine, and how much pain its being torn away from France had caused him. We talked at a great rate, asking each other endless questions; then Madame R. went away, and I ran to tell Drumont the good news. My voice was trembling as I read him the paragraph in the paper, and we hugged each other from sheer joy.

* * * * *

August.—Alas! the victory at Mulhouse must have cost us a great many men, but those who escaped will cherish a memory of that fight which nothing will obliterate.

Joys, like sorrows, never come singly. I have had a letter from Paul telling me that he has managed to get sent to Dijon. He will certainly be safer there, as he will be further away from the frontier, but I know what he is like—now that he has gone in for flying again, he will be wanting to distinguish himself, to do something or other, and then—and then . . .

Well, I have a different reason for anxiety, that's all.

There is nothing in the papers to-day.

* * * * *

August.—In Belgium they are bracing themselves for the great battle, which is inevitable; on the

frontier they are watching, and at home we are weeping.

We go into Fontainebleau every day to hear the war news. We write to people, and they do not get the letters; people write to us, and the same thing happens; and in one's desolation one is out of tune with God, and Nature, with the trees, the sun, and all existing things. And when evening comes one can think even of the stars only as looking down callously on the fields of slaughter.

There is still no news, and everyone is beginning to complain of the posts. I think that as long as soldiers are being moved about on the railways the postal arrangements will be bad. The postman told us to-day that there is now only going to be one post a day, at seven o'clock.

The absence of news is absolutely unbearable, and not for the sake of our own dear ones only, but for all those others who are sacrificing themselves and dying to defend us.

Yesterday evening, as I was leaning out of my window, I heard a train passing, and soldiers shouting "To Berlin." Ah! God grant that they may get there! and I cried as I thought of my son: Where is he? Why can't he write to me? Is he still at the aerodrome?

This morning the butcher said to me, "There is

no more beef or mutton, we have only got veal." All the better; I wish we did not have to eat at all.

* * * * *

August.—Detachments of Turcos coming from Oran and passing by Cette, Marseilles, Lyons, Montereau, Moret, and Paris, *en route* for Brussels, have been passing through unceasingly for the last two days. At Moret they stop for an hour, during which the poor Turcos get out of their vans and walk about stretching themselves on the station platform. The people in the neighbourhood take them food and drink and clothes, and they are as happy as children. Yesterday, as I was going to bed, about ten o'clock, one of these trains was passing down the valley. The effect was striking: I could scarcely see the carriages, there were so few lights in the train, but a plaintive sort of melody was issuing from one of them. The unending line of vans full of soldiers playing the tunes of their country as they go to their death, above them a blood-red crescent moon—it was a terrible and unforgetable sight. I shall never forget that phantom train.

Oh, my son ! where are you ?

* * * * *

August.—Still no news of Paul. I looked at the date of the telegram he sent from Dijon—it was the 8th—from the 8th to the 16th makes seven days without news. I think I should hear to-morrow,

Monday. I wonder if anyone remembered that it was the feast of the Assumption to-day. It was merely by chance that I did. It was my mother's birthday when she was alive, and came right in the middle of the holidays, so we children were all at home with her. How unhappy she would be if she were still alive, her sons and grandson all gone off. What a sorrow for her old age. But what a consolation it would have been to me to weep on her shoulder and to know that she understood.

One is never entirely miserable when one still has a mother.

My brothers are at Granville—we are still without news from them. It does not seem worth while writing when you know that letters will not reach their destination. They say that the Staff does not wish news to get through, so that people may know as little as possible of the movements of troops before the big battles.

The last train of Turcos went through to-day.

* * * * *

August.—A letter from Paul at last—so dramatic, so simple, so brave!

He says, in talking of the departure of the first flight of aeroplanes: "Their departure was a fine sight. The chaplain stood in front of the line of planes, and said some prayers and blessed them, while the airmen stood to attention in their machines and saluted him

as he passed along. Directly afterwards came the terrific roar of six engines starting at the same moment, as one after the other they rose into the sky, formed up, circled round once or twice, and then disappeared. A gloomy silence fell on those who were left behind in the camp." In the evening, however, apparently the youthful spirits of all these brave fellows came to the top again, and the barrack-room rang with roars of laughter, patriotic songs, and thumping on beds, and they were boys once more.

After reading this charming letter, I was more miserable than ever. I feel how very near him danger is, and my helplessness increases my fear.

We spent the day at the station serving out food and drink to the soldiers travelling to Paris and then on North. They were all so happy, singing and laughing and promising to bring us the Kaiser's head.

* * * * *

August.—Four days have gone by without anything interesting happening. The great battle is still impending. The Germans are as savage as ever, and news of my son comes very seldom. Fortunately his little fiancée writes to me, and her letters reach me, as they have not so far to come. These dear children lavish so much affection on me and are always assuring me how certain they are that we shall win.

* * * * *

August.—No more troop-trains are running, and we are not going to the station any more; but in a few days wounded will be passing through. I am not very brave when I see blood and wounds, but I must get over that! I belong to a Voluntary Aid Detachment, and I shall be as useful as I can.

* * * * *

August.—The news is mixed—on the one hand we have taken Mulhouse, but on the other the Germans are in Brussels. They say that we are preparing a trap for them, and that they will be caught all round. One does not know what to believe.

I have been to see one of the inhabitants of Veneux, who got congestion while at the front and is at home on sick-leave, after being in the Hospital at Rambervilliers. M. C., who has seen the enemy, is full of the courage, keenness, and dash of our men. He was in the Field Hospital for forty-eight hours, with his revolver and bullets on the table beside him, as they were expecting the Uhlans, who were only a few miles off, the whole time.

M. C. saw at Dinant a lieutenant who had got hold of a machine-gun, and was mowing down the Germans who were appearing in fours on the summit of a hill. It required an order from a superior officer to bring that lieutenant back. He remained there alone, without thinking of the danger, and only retired when, tired of arguing, they told him, " Well, if you

don't care about your life, we do care about the loss of a machine-gun."

Every moment one comes across similar acts of heroism. An airman is in difficulties, out in the open on German ground. Prussians arrive on the horizon. The airman fills up with petrol, gives his screw a turn, and rises in the air, to the great amazement of the Boches, who feared a trap and had not dared to come near him. To make up for it, as soon as the bird took flight, the Germans, recovering their courage, fired at the aeroplane.

* * * * *

August.—Paul has written to me; I have his letter here. It is just like him, brave boy! Oh, I am sure that he will come back to me!

This is the letter:

"My dear Mother,

"I am writing to you at a temperature of 86° in the shade; that is what the sun in Burgundy means, and the air we breathe when we are flying just dries up our throats. Since I came here I've had a letter from Muncho, which is a perfect masterpiece—so full of poetry and love. I had to pull myself together, though, after it; too much happiness might not be good for me. But life here does not let one indulge one's feelings much, anyhow, however good one's excuse may be. For there is one supreme feeling that holds

all others in check—the desire to take part in the great struggle as soon as possible. You would like to know how we spend our day. Well, we fly from five till eight; then the pilots are free till 5.30 in the evening, when we start again, and fly in a fantastic circle over the country. You should hear these great war-birds throbbing and roaring through the air. It is their way of saying they are as discontented at waiting as we are. After this we come down into the camp, where we dine and go to bed at the regulation hour. You asked me for details of my life at Dijon, and there they are. They are not very thrilling, and I expected to have had something better to tell you by now, nearly a month after the declaration of war. However, our revolvers were given out to us to-day, which shows that we have not been forgotten. I think, if we leave here in the course of the next fortnight, that we shall go to the squadron at Mulhouse. Though, as a matter of fact, no one knows anything about it. Those who go off are as dumb as fishes, and those who come back are absolutely tongue-tied. Oh, discipline is a fine thing!

"I must now stop, Mother dear. Be brave, because it encourages me. If you give up I shall feel it, and I shan't be worth much. Best love, dear Mother.

"Your son,

"PAUL."

* * * * *

August.—The feast of St. Louis and my brother's birthday. I don't even know where he is. We have just been defeated at Charleroi with enormous loss. Our armies have retired and are on the defensive again. How can Generals bring themselves to allow armies inferior in strength to fight against an enemy with infinitely superior numbers! The Germans are at Namur, and we hold the heights of Nancy, from which we are shelling them incessantly. We have still got Mulhouse for the moment.

* * * * *

August.—A body of German cavalry has entered Tourcoing and Roubaix, so the papers tell us to-day; and here is food for thought. After a night of sleeplessness, and often of tears, one longs for daylight to come and bring better news to encourage one.

I am going for a walk through the woods with my dogs to get away from Drumont's pessimism.

The Allies have resumed the offensive, and the Belgians have driven back the Germans who were surrounding Antwerp. Patience is a virtue very difficult to practise under existing circumstances. It is irritating to see the sun shining so insolently when one thinks of the massacres on which its rays are falling. The callousness of nature in the face of the most hideous calamities is one of the things which always astounds me.

Old prophecies are being re-published proclaiming

the fall of the German Empire. People gather together to read them aloud, and pass them on to their neighbours, like so many thirsty travellers happening on a spring of fresh water.

"Oh, yes! To see the last Prussian at his last gasp, and all due to us. What a glorious sight!" That is what we are all saying to each other in France.

These hordes of barbarians who rob the dead, kill the wounded, and fire on our ambulances; who shoot old men, women, and children, and girls when they have violated them; who cut off little boys' hands, so that they shall not fight against them later on—these monsters who have escaped from Hell will return thither or else there is no Divine justice.

* * * * *

August.—No news for four days. We advance in Lorraine and retire in Flanders. Namur has fallen into the hands of the Germans. They have bombarded and occupied Malines.

They are advancing slowly, owing to the brave Belgians, but they are advancing. Our idea seems to be to bide our time. I cannot say I understand these tactics, which seem in direct opposition to every idea one had ever formed as to the conduct of war; but there is doubtless no need that the general public should understand them. Here everyone is in a mortal funk. Some say that the Prussians will be in Paris in a week. A neighbour of ours says that they

are bearing down on Meaux—everyone puts his own interpretation on the news. The people of Seine-et-Marne do not seem to me to be particularly heroic. The peasants are limited in their view, and think merely of fields, houses, and money. What can one expect of them ?

Whilst I was plunged in these bitter reflections the bell of St. Maines sounded the Angelus. The evening bells are the lay-sisters of space—they lead the hours back into eternity.

I live in a sort of lethargy—as regards my mind, that is, for I have never been so active in my house before. Gardening, ironing, and cooking are my daily occupations, and soothe my nerves a little. Every now and then I go to Fontainebleau with the R.'s, who take me there in their carriage. We go round getting papers, news, and supplies. We study the officers' expressions, and get very angry at seeing so many soldiers doing nothing wherever we go, when they are so badly needed at the front. But unfortunately it is no good being angry.

III.—FLIGHT TO VAL ANDRÉ

From August 30th to September 10th.—What a lot we have gone through in this space of time! How upset our life has been! First of all there was the continuous stream of fugitives evacuating the northern parts which the Germans have overrun, after having at last broken down the Allies' defence. They have got through Belgium in spite of the efforts of that splendid nation. Nothing has been able to stem the rush of the barbarians—the resistance of the Belgians delayed it for a little, and that was all. It is true that was much, for it enabled the first English troops to join up with us; but in spite of this valuable reinforcement, we were obliged to fall back and allow the invasion to develop.

And how swift it has been! A refugee from Rethel told me they were warned at eleven o'clock at night to leave the town, as it was about to be bombarded, and he and his wife had scarcely time to jump into their car and join the five or six other people in the town, who were also escaping in cars, when they heard the guns.

"No one can imagine," he said, "what agonizing

and thrilling moments one can experience in an hour. We were just crossing the town-boundaries when we heard the German guns; my wife had sunk down in the car and was sobbing, while I was hunting for the right road, and making vain efforts to pierce the darkness, to see if any Uhlans or Prussians were bearing down on Rethel. And then—I thought of my house and all its contents which were going to be destroyed: it was all we had in the world.

"When we arrived at Rheims, where we had meant to stay for a little, they said to us, 'Don't stop here. Leave as quickly as you can—the Germans are expected.' At Châlons it was the same. It almost seemed as if an army of German motor cars was in pursuit. Relentless destiny seemed to be swooping down upon us like a bird of prey."

In view of this invasion by the enemy, Melun, Montereau, Fontainebleau, and even the charming little village of St. Mainès, which I can see from my windows, were evacuated. Terror spread throughout the country places. The news of the atrocities committed in Belgium by the Kaiser's monsters emptied the villages in the North in a single night, and one can imagine nothing more dismal than the stream of fugitives along the roads of France. We saw them passing by our houses, coming from goodness knows where, piled up on carts with their animals, their bedding, their old men and their children, and all their household goods.

They had come through Paris, their horses almost dropping with fatigue, to seek a refuge in some friendly district, but where that would be they knew not. For the moment their only idea was to go a long, long way off to the other ends of the earth, in order to escape from the blood-thirsty hordes.

From the North right down to the South of France the roads were covered with thousands of panic-stricken refugees, in carts, in cars, in carriages, in trains, all in the wildest confusion. Many of them camped out all night, in their carts, and quite near the house there were some whom we tried to help a little. The stories they told led us also to think of flight.

One night the soldiers from the depot at Fontainebleau passed under our windows, going in the direction of Provins. An officer who is a great friend of ours had said to us, "When you see the soldiers from the depot going—go too." It was terrible.

It was a beautiful moonlight night, the regiment in extended formation marched along the Avenue des Sablons. Their measured tread purposely muffled, the slight rattling of their mess-tins against their haversacks, and from time to time a curt command given in a low voice, threw us into an agony of fear. We could not sleep: and hidden behind the Venetian blinds we and our maid spent the night in watching them.

We had tried to give the soldiers drinks, but the officers objected. I thought of all the mothers whose sons were marching through that tragic night to death, while they, poor women, were sleeping or peacefully praying for them in some far-off corner of France. I thought of my own boy, and my heart was wrung with anguish.

When day came I went to lie down, feeling crushed, all my courage gone.

The next day the Mayor sent to say that we ought to go; an enemy force was at Provins; the Germans were advancing rapidly; communications would be cut by them, and it would be wisest to be off.

I could not make up my mind to it, although all these stories filled me with terror, and Paul said in every letter, "For Heaven's sake—go!" I still shrank from the pang of leaving my house and all that was in it, and especially my animals, my dogs, my mementoes, all the links that bind one to one's home.

We should not have been setting out at random. Kind friends at Val André, on the north coast, were expecting us, and had offered us their house. But we had to get there, and I had a shrewd idea of the difficulties we should meet with on the way.

Our departure took place on Friday, August 30th—a distracting, tearful scene. The dogs, who guessed that something was in the air, were frantic, and would not leave us for an instant.

Drumont, who was hopelessly depressed by this series of events, was in favour of going the moment I mentioned the subject to him. He showed no emotion at leaving the house; he moved as if in a dream. "Black" caught hold of my dress. I took him up in my arms and kissed him in memory of my son who was so fond of him.

At the gate I found our friends the R.'s, who had come to say good-bye. "We are going to Toulouse to-morrow. Do not lose heart—we shall see each other again some day."

I got into the carriage, unable to speak. However, before we started, I said to Madame R.: "You were so sure *they* would not get into France." "Well, yes, I was—but even now that they are here I would not go away if it were not for my father and my niece."

"You are very confident!"

We were off. At Moret the railway-carriage was filled up, and we were much over-crowded as far as Malesherbes. There we had to change for Orleans. I thought we might perhaps be able to get something to eat, so I asked an official covered with gold lace. He laughed in my face. "You will not find a single piece of bread in the whole town. Everything has been ordered or taken by the travellers who have been going through since early this morning." I resigned myself to the inevitable, and we got into the train for Orleans.

The journey, which generally takes two hours, lasted for ten. We were packed like sardines. There were all sorts of things in our carriage, from a baby's bath to a birdcage. Oh! how often we stopped between the stations! (We heard afterwards that there had been an accident on a side line, which accounted for the block and the impossibility of getting on.) The passengers kept getting out and sitting on the banks, and the children played about and amused themselves.

Trains full of soldiers, and even of wounded, were hung up like us on parallel lines. All this confusion brought home to one the panic and terror of this herd of human beings who, in order to escape from the enemy, were rushing headlong into inconceivable troubles.

On the edge of the forest of Orleans we stopped for more than an hour. By this time it was night, but the moon was shining. Another train had also drawn up, and in the moonlight, the two trains looked like long funeral processions.

The Master had not spoken since we left. With my face in my hands I was crying, and there was complete silence in the compartment. All of a sudden the most exquisite song rose on the tragic night. The voice came from the other train which had been stopped like ours near the forest. It was a man's voice, and he sang the serenade from " La Damnation de Faust "

—"Vous qui faites l'endormie," etc., and this song, rendered with feeling by a musical and charming voice, lifted my spirits from gloom and my soul from despair.

How I listened to this song, which bore from the train-load of wounded the sweet message of a loving thought to some far-away sweetheart. In the moonlight in the midst of all this human misery and distress it was sublime.

Oh! love, thou art within the reach of all, and like the great sea sheddest thy glamour even within the lowliest dwelling.

I shall long remember that man's song, and his warm and vibrant southern voice.

These poetic impressions were soon obliterated at Orleans. Never shall I forget the hell that station was. Drumont was not able to stir, his legs had stiffened up so much from want of movement. I called to a Red Cross Attendant, and between us we managed to get him out. But it seemed impossible to walk through that station without treading upon something or somebody. Hundreds of human beings were stretched on seats and on the ground; children were sleeping amongst bits of orange-peel and dirty pieces of paper, their mothers were squatting down beside them. Stretcher-bearers were going round with their stretchers, and it was with the greatest difficulty that we progressed towards the Red Cross

depot to try to get some soup or a cup of tea for Drumont. A sentry barred our way, and said that no one was allowed to pass. I showed him my badge and he said he would fetch the Major.

Major de L. appeared and asked me what I wanted.

I briefly sketched our Odyssey and asked him to allow us to have something in the Red Cross canteen. I introduced Drumont, and the Major instantly went up to him and said:

"Whatever are you doing here, Master? Of course I will look after you. Here is my office. Will you rest in there while you are waiting for them to bring you something hot? Goodness me! I should never have expected to find you here."

"You are not more astonished at finding me here than I am at being here, Major, and I thank my stars that I've met you."

The Major settled us in, gave us two men to look after us, and went off.

Soon they brought us tea and soup and sandwiches, all of which were most acceptable to Drumont; but I could only drink—my gorge rose at the sight of food.

The Major soon came back with an outside porter, and pointing to us, said:

"Here are a lady and gentleman for whom you must find a room in the town. You must do everything you possibly can. It is absolutely essential."

We exchanged a few pleasant words and some sad reflections on the war, and after shaking hands left the station in a cab with the aforementioned porter to look for quarters in Orleans.

No shelter anywhere! . . . and never have I felt so keenly the unfriendliness of a town crammed with people as I did that night as we went round from hotel to hotel.

At last, tired of trying in vain, our poor guide offered to put us up himself. The night was getting colder, and we accepted his offer joyfully. "At any rate I shall not have to sleep on a seat in the station," I thought to myself, and I felt very grateful to the kind porter.

Then followed an extraordinary scene: his home was of the poorest description; his wife and children were already in bed, and they were obliged to make the grandfather, who was sound asleep, get up in order that we might have his bed. All this upheaval of the household was carried out to the accompaniment of the most kindly and reassuring remarks, all the more touching because they were said with that true delicacy of feeling which one finds at times amongst the poor.

They put us up like that for three days. Drumont was much troubled at not being able to see clearly in the room we had, which was behind the shop and looked into a shed. His eyes have long troubled him,

and now he could scarcely see to wash his face, and this gave rise to a string of remarks such as:

"Well, anyway, you must own that the Kaiser has managed to set the whole world by the ears. To think that a poor author like me, half blind and nearly paralyzed, should be obliged to career hither and thither without the faintest idea when I shall get to where I want to go, simply because it is the will of that one-armed potentate!"

I laughed at these outbursts, but inwardly I was anxious as to how we should get out of Orleans. Not only were we miserably lodged, but it was impossible to get anything to eat unless we actually watched a table in a restaurant and seized upon it the minute the people got up.

Every day I stood on the station square trying to find a car to take us to Val André. At last, on the third day, I found one whose driver was willing to take us out of Orleans, but only as far as Laval.

At Laval, where we arrived at four in the afternoon, it was the same story all over again—no room in the hotels. I managed, however, to soften the heart of the proprietress of the Hôtel de Paris, and she consented to put up two beds for us in the office.

A further pause of three days ensued, then another car took us from Laval to Val André.

And there at last I breathed again! We were received with joy by our friends, who had been very

anxious about us. I found news of my son awaiting me—he is still at Dijon, but says he has taken the necessary steps to leave.

That night I prayed for a long time at my window, which looks on to the sea, whose murmur I hear; and at last I felt I had reached a refuge which, though distant, was safe.

IV.—VAL ANDRÉ

THE news is improving. We are driving back the enemy, and they say that from Nancy to the Vosges there are no Germans left.

Every day I see the names Brisach and Neuf Brisach, and they remind me of the country where my father was born, that frontier-country that breeds such stalwart men.

A very beautiful letter was quoted, written by a sister to her brother, which I should like to put in here:

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"I have heard that Charles and Lucien were killed on the 28th August. Eugène is dangerously wounded; as for Louis and Jean, they are dead also. Rose has disappeared.

"Mother is weeping, but she says that you must be strong and go and avenge them. I hope your superiors will allow you to do this. Jean got the Legion of Honour. Do likewise.

"They have taken them all from us—out of eleven who were fighting eight are dead. My dear brother,

do your duty—that is all we ask of you. God gave you your life, and He has the right to take it back again, Mother says. We send you our best love, and although we should like to see you first . . .

"The Prussians are here; Jandon's son is dead; they have plundered everything. I have just come back from Gerbevilliers, which they have completely destroyed. The cowards! Go, my dear brother, and make the offering of your life. We hope to see you again, for a sort of presentiment tells us to hope.

"We send you our dearest love. Farewell, and au revoir if God wills it.

"Your

"SISTERS.

"It is for our sakes and for France. Think of your brothers and of your grandfather in '70."

How simple and how grand! When the people feel like this the country cannot perish.

Apart from the news of the war, our life here is peaceful and uneventful. I write, and I go out every day to the sea or to get the papers; I pray, and I think unceasingly of those who are fighting for us, and I am obsessed by the sufferings and torments they are enduring.

In the evening I spend long hours at my window listening to the sea, which says so much to those that love it.

* * * * *

September.—Several days have gone by without any news of Paul. Where is he? What is he doing?

We have been requisitioning beds in order to put up convalescents here and relieve the Hospital of St. Brieuc. The whole countryside is excited at this idea. All the women want to help us, but as soon as we ask them for money they melt into thin air. We are therefore starting our temporary hospital without any help, and with our own slender resources.

The P's. have been allowed to use the Casino. When we have got the beds the wounded will be very well off there—it faces the sea.

This horrible war has already lasted a month, and it is two months since I saw Paul, as he was doing his military training when war was declared.

How long shall I be without seeing him? When I think of all the sorrows this war is going to bring us, I feel overcome with sadness and depression; and yet how dare I complain, even to myself, when so many mothers are already in mourning!

Our friends are very kind, but all their attentions and kindness get on my nerves in my present state of mind.

There is no change in the war news. Here and in the surrounding country people are beginning to receive the sad announcements of deaths.

Yesterday the sun was lighting up the sea as far as the eye could reach, and the fishing smacks were rising

and falling on the water, and the air was so deliciously warm that it seemed like spring instead of autumn. Suddenly there issued from one of the neighbouring villas cries of despair—the cries of a distracted woman, painful and tragic lamentations, shrieks of horror—it was terrible! I was in my dressing room, and it came as such a shock to me that I was obliged to sit down. My heart was palpitating, and I was completely shaken by the revulsion of feeling resulting from this terrible blow, which might just as well have fallen on me as on the unfortunate woman whose cries I heard. She had just heard that her son had been killed. I felt it all day. In order to try and distract me Madame P. took me up to the top of the cliff, where there is a fisherman's house. When we got up there and were looking at the magnificent view, we came upon a poor Breton woman in tears because she had had no news of her boy for three weeks. "He was such a good son, dear ladies, always the first to start fishing and the last to come in. He supported me, and now, at my age I am obliged to go and shrimp and catch sand-eels, and the people at the villas give me bread. If I don't receive any news of him I shall die—I tell you I shall die!"

We sympathized, and offered her consolation in the form in which she needed it most—that is to say, in money.

As we came down the slopes of the cliff I said to

Madame P.: "You see, dear friend, we find the same grief we are feeling ourselves everywhere—it is universal."

As we came back towards the sea, Mme. P. told me about an old maid, Mlle. D., who used to live in that ruined house when it was new, and whose life had been one long story of suffering and disappointment.

In the days when she still had some means she was madly in love with a man. This man, after having lost all his own money in speculations, got through hers by persuading her to take shares in hotels which ruined her. Not only did he himself live at this unfortunate woman's expense, but he had a niece and nephew whom he planted on Mlle. D., and the nephew helped his uncle to fleece the doting old maid.

When she had lost all her money this gang of swindlers left her, and she withdrew to this house and lived there alone—as far away as possible from those who had caused her so much suffering.

My friend Mme. P., who has lived in this part of the world for twenty years, and had followed the tragedy in all its phases, used to go with her husband of an evening to spend an hour with this poor wreck. She used to be so glad to see them, and received them with unfailing geniality.

Darkness was falling on the beach, and we came back to the house saddened and in silence.

* * * * *

September.—I received the following letter from P. this morning:

"DEAR MOTHER,

"I am writing you a few lines to explain my long silence.

"As I saw that I had run my head up against a stone wall, as far as concerns the B aeroplane, which the Army will not have at any price, though Heaven knows why, and that I was going to be left in complete idleness at Dijon, I put in a request at Headquarters to be sent off on a V biplane with a machine-gun. As soon as I had handed in my request I was obliged to stay in the camp all day in case I should be sent for, and it was frightfully difficult to write to you from the camp. I only heard yesterday that Lieutenant N., Quartermaster D., and the pilot Fugairon, had been suggested by wire as the pilots for the V.

"We are only waiting for our orders to go off, and perhaps by the time you get this letter we shall have left Dijon, and then full steam ahead for glory and the extermination of the Boches. I've a card or two up my sleeve that will do their business, I think.

"As I write I am starting to eat a box of sardines, wash it down with 'casse-pattes' or 'pousse au crime,' as we call the wine here. I am glad to hear you are looking after the wounded, for so we are both

doing our bit. So is my dear little fiancée, who writes to me that she is knitting mittens and mufflers all day and nearly all night. What a darling little wife I shall have after the war—what a dream of bliss I indulge in when I forget—oh! so very seldom—the critical times in which we are living. The hum of an engine soon brings me back to reality, and there is something fascinating in that, too, painful though it is.

"I must leave you now, dear Mother, with a great hug from your old air-rover, who is soon to be let loose. And then—stand away from my car! it's going to simply rain down bullets, and my bird will lay some hard eggs, I can tell you!

"Your son, who sends you his love and is always thinking of you,

"P. F."

Certainly this prolonged stay of such a bevy of airmen at Dijon seems inexplicable, when the Taubes are coming over Paris dropping their murderous bombs. Why are they ignoring this force?

Since the beginning of the war our aeroplanes have scarcely been mentioned, and yet the Germans keep sending us theirs. This makes our boys rebellious, and Paul, who is little accustomed to give in, is withering under it; this apprenticeship in subduing his will is a hard one for him.

* * * * *

September.—We have been getting ready the rooms we are going to furnish for our convalescents. They will be open to the air, and facing the sea.

The battle of the Marne, in which we drove the Germans a long way northward, has produced a tremendous effect, and greatly improved our *morale*. Now they are fighting on the Aisne, and the dead are being piled up on either side. The trenches are so full of them that our soldiers have to tread on them!

One no longer dares to read the details of the fighting, they are so ghastly. The English, who up till now have been few in number, are increasing and beginning to give us more efficacious help. They have not perhaps got our spirit and dash, but they have an iron will, and when they have been told to hold such and such a point, would let themselves be killed to a man rather than abandon it.

The arrangements for the wounded are getting on. The money goes to some people and not to others, and there is much jealousy and competition. There is a family here, the V.'s, who are dealers in military accoutrements, gold braid, epaulettes, sword knots, etc., and have a shop in Paris in the Rue de Richelieu. They have been kept here by the war. The wife, who is the daughter of a Jew who made a huge fortune as a moneylender, at the very beginning of the mobilization collected in a short time, and on

her own initiative, ten thousand francs for the soldiers. Some wounded were sent to her, and she put them up—at the hotel—at two francs fifty a day a head. However, since through her husband's business she has a great deal of influence in military circles, she makes a great fuss and show, and the authorities give in and approve of everything she does.

Whereas they dispute the right of real Frenchwomen like us, with a man like Drumont at their head, to have wounded even though we house them and feed them at our own expense. And wherever we go to collect we are met with:

"Oh, we have already subscribed to the V.'s!"

I often go up to my rock, and I seem to be so far above the pettiness of this world when I am up there that I feel restored both morally and physically.

When I go home the Master dictates his article to me; it is always so full of ideas, so clear, so studded with philosophical generalizations; after that he goes and sits on the terrace facing the sea, and rests his mind by watching the beautiful sunset which gives us every evening something different to look at. There is a peculiar delight in setting the convalescent hospital to rights and cleaning it with our own hands—for we can find no one to help us. I scrub the tables, make the beds, and nail up rows of pegs in the big ward, without any idea of being rewarded in any way for my trouble, thinking only of the many mothers

who are suffering and weeping, and hoping that someone will do by our sons as we are doing by theirs.

* * * * *

September.—We have had to work really hard for the last few days, as the Red Cross at Saint Brieuc notified us that they were sending us some wounded. Still no women to help us. We have had to finish the cleaning ourselves, get in the provisions, sort the linen given by the work-parties and sundry charitable people, warn the matron, etc.

At any rate it keeps one from thinking.

The people in this part are not much perturbed; they ought to have the Prussians on their heels to punish them for their hideous selfishness.

We had to go to church to rehearse the music for a choral Mass. The collection is to be for the hospital. As we came out of church I received a telegram from my son just to say that he was well—nothing more; he has not written because he is frightfully bored and does not wish me to know how depressed he is. These young people feel deeply this life of aimless inaction at Dijon, when everyone in Paris is saying, "What are our airmen doing?"

All the same I am surprised and a little hurt with Paul. How can he, who is always so tender and affectionate, remain so obstinately silent? When I gave vent to this thought to a friend, he looked at

me askance with a sort of smile which meant: "You see it's not the fault of the post."

This smile, with its touch of irony, set me thinking! Even with the truest friends life is made up of concealments, dissimulations, and small meannesses.

All of us conceal from our neighbours our inmost thoughts, our secret wounds, our hidden dreams, our cherished illusions, and our unknown longings. And the part of us which we hide so jealously is the most real, the most essential, the most enduring. That which we offer to the outer world is only the husk and the mask!

Ah! what we mothers hide!

* * * * *

September.—Our choral Mass is over. There was a very large congregation, and many of the women were weeping. Our friend P. played delightfully. We collected 300 francs.

The news has been the same for many days. We are not retiring, but we are not advancing. The ring which was being formed to encircle them is not closing in.

One feels very discouraged when one reads the morning papers and does not find in them the event which one was expecting and hoping for.

* * * * * *

September.—A long letter from my son at last:

"DEAR MOTHER,

"I have not written to you for a long time because I have been working for my commission, and your reproachful telegram made me rush to my inkpot, and my work table.

"First of all, you say that the evacuation of Dijon has made you very anxious. Cheer up, that does not prove anything; if Dijon has been evacuated, the one and only reason is because there were too many refugees there.

"And now I've got my commission! My going to the front is only a question of weeks. I passed the altitude test this morning. The weather was magnificent. All the same, I was shaken like a plum-tree for the first six hundred feet, after that it was as calm as anything. I went peacefully up to six thousand feet, and once up there I had to stay there for an hour to fulfil the conditions of the test. Oh, how cold it was! For a little while I was above the sea of clouds, and I could see nothing except the sky, and beneath me the immense woolly surface of massed up clouds rolling towards each other like huge snowballs. The shadow of my aeroplane ran and jumped and pranced over these waves; it was superbly beautiful and imposing. When it was about time to come down again, I picked out a gap in the clouds and passed through it, and then I saw the earth again.

"Now I've got two gold wings embroidered on

my coat, with the scout's star on my sleeve and the armlet with the sky-blue and gold badge, which designates the members of the Flying Corps, and is worn by certified pilots.

"I keep on receiving delightful letters from my little fiancée, who is proud, she says, to sacrifice her happiness to her country; how charming she is! Her letters teach me to love and appreciate her more and more, and you, I am sure, will find in her a very affectionate and very lovable daughter.

"The anxiety about her parents, who are interned in Douai by the Germans, makes her very sad. But I must not get worried about it, and so I will continue.

"I could tell you some very reassuring things regarding the war and the way in which it is being conducted at present, but I must not say anything about it, as we are forbidden to do so. When we go out on a reconnaissance we either do not know our exact route or are only told it a few minutes before we start.

"We are being very useful, but all that is a secret. I don't think, Mother dear, that you will complain of the length of my letter, which is pretty full up with details of the private life of your son.

"Now I will shoot through space once more and give you a good hug and heaps of love, from

"Your little

"PAUL."

* * * * *

October.—The operations, by which we advance a little every day, and which are to lead us to victory, develop very slowly. The Russians did very well in the last battle of Ossowatz, and as long as the Germans are beaten, whether it is by the Russians or by us, we are delighted. We have been weighed down by the malignity of this race for nearly half a century, and their barbarity has been demonstrated in all its horrors since the war started. The Germans' crimes outstrip the imagination, but they are marked down for defeat, and they know it themselves. The English Alliance surprised them and threw them out in their calculations. England is helping us. We must acknowledge the splendid spirit of her Army—its coolness and endurance. It is true their commissariat is excellent. Their food is good and nourishing, which helps them to come up into action feeling strong and hearty.

We hear that to begin with they would not dig trenches, as they said they were soldiers, not masons. Certainly this mole-like warfare is enough to surprise anyone, but now the English soldiers are digging trenches just as ours are. Anyhow, as a soldier was saying the other day, they are charming companions, not very effusive, but always to be relied on.

Will they spend their Christmas at home? Ah! how I wish that all those who are fighting might be able to—all those brave fellows deserve to spend Christmas

comfortably at home by their own firesides and with their own families, after living through so many terrible days.

My son is not at the front yet, but there will be no Christmas for him either.

* * * * *

October.—We have had a tremendous storm for the last three days. The sea dashed itself furiously on the shingle and broke in white foam over the rocks. One night in particular I thought that the manor-house would be blown away; the wind beat against the walls in great gusts almost like waves; one heard it whistling over the roof and all round the walls, and the groaning, wailing, and howling, made the storm most dramatic.

A fish-wife told me it was due to the " bore."

After three days of rebellious rage the sea has at last gone down. This morning it is sapphire-blue variegated with long streaks of greyish-green, with seagulls dotted here and there like water-lilies on some tranquil lake.

October is weighing down upon us with its grey skies and morning mists, which are dissipated by the splendour of the afternoons. In spite of this the vegetation is changing colour, and all along the roads the smell of fallen apples rises to one's nostrils. Everywhere the potatoes are being gathered in from the fields. But none of these things distract our attention from our one thought—the war.

The English troops and those who have come from India are a great help to us. Every day we hear of the death of young men whom we had known or met in Parisian society. On those days the charm of the sea vanishes—it either aggravates our sorrow or lulls it by the impotent consolation of its splendour.

To-day the sea is covered with grey mists veiled in a gauzy fog. This evening it will be a fiery red, and the sun will drown itself in blood. At last the twilight will come down and hide the dying splendour of the light. Then one's thoughts grow gloomy; as night falls my brain seems to be full of the sufferings and cries of the wounded dying out in the open, and all the accursed terror spread by the enemy and all his crimes, and I long to go to bed so as not to think, so that to-morrow may come more quickly and daylight drive away these horrors.

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October.—I wrote a long letter to Muncho. Dear little thing! I have been thinking of her so much to-day. It was because they were talking of the son of an old family, M. de S., who has just been killed at the front. They were saying that since his marriage he had been kept away from his family by his wife, and that she had prevented him from seeing his mother. I exclaimed:

"Well, he can't have had much character to give

up his parents like that for his new family," and a lady who was there answered:

"But it is nearly always like that. Young wives use their influence over their husbands to estrange them from their mothers. Are they afraid of criticisms and remarks, and the mother's influence on a mind which in their turn they wish to form according to their own ideas? I don't know. Or is it simply a form of inexplicable jealousy which impels them to cause suffering to a far from formidable rival? I cannot tell you, but it is so." She said this so coldly, cruelly, threateningly, that a chill came over me.

* * * * *

October.—The newspapers are full of the details of the landing of the Indians in France, of the rejoicings at their arrival, and of their delight at being so well received. What a splendid race they are, and how I should like to meet them!

I remember so well seeing them on the steps of Government House in Madras—superb, statuesque figures, emblems of determination and immutable strength.

When the English see them, do they recall the blood-stained pages of the history of their conquest of India? Do they think of the terrible insurrections at Delhi, the massacres at Agra where the flower of the English aristocracy was mutilated, violated, burnt and thrown into wells? When they read the stories

of the monstrous reprisals taken by the Hindu armies, and the way they plundered at the time of the conquest of India, they must feel very proud of having subjugated such a race.

"Subjugated is not the word to use," Drumont said when we were talking of this. "British rule in India, and the formation of an Anglo-Indian Army composed of the most incongruous elements that could conceivably be combined, have been made possible by the fact that the English, although they bent them under their iron yoke, took into consideration, to a certain extent, their caste prejudices, their point of view, their pride in the gorgeous Rajahs who once ruled the country, their resentment at having been defeated, and their obvious contempt for the conquerors. . . . The respect the English showed for these various feelings made those they had conquered more yielding and more malleable.

"And what care they take with regard to their food. One hears that the Hindus arrived here with their cooks, their rice, their curry, and sheep and goats for their special use!

"You must allow," continued Drumont, "that the transport of an army under such circumstances is a wonderful feat on the part of the English, and shows the most exquisite consideration. And perhaps, who knows, these descendants of Rajahs may have realized how noble and chivalrous a race are these Allies of

ours, who have not been corrupted by a Republic . . . and may have deigned to be conquered by them. You have lived in this India of a Thousand and One Nights, and ought to know—am I not right ?"

Silence fell. This talk had filled my mind with sweet memories of the country where my youth was spent. The sea grew red under the rays of the setting sun, and spread itself out lazily and calmly as if to retain them. Soon the inner vision faded, and I saw nothing but the beautiful landscape which masked so much misery and suffering.

Antwerp has fallen. This news destroys all our hopes, for only yesterday they were saying that Antwerp would be able to hold up the enemy for a year at least.

What is happening ? To know nothing but what they choose to tell us is irritating and maddening to the last degree. It may even have an unfortunate effect on those who are fighting. If they receive pessimistic letters from those at home, they also will be depressed, and will be in a fair way to lose courage.

* * * * *

October.—We hear that there is snow in the Vosges and in the North. Oh ! poor men in the trenches, badly fed, short of blankets, exposed to all weathers, getting no sleep ! May God have mercy on them and put an end to these horrors !

Jean de Pierrefeu, in an article in *L'Opinion*, admirably describes these long days in the trenches—the depressing twilight, and the waiting for the cannonade to cease; then night, and the heavenly quiet in the woods of Lorraine; the rustle as the soldiers get out their cold and meagre rations; and at length rest, as they stretch themselves out under the trees by the light of the moon which sometimes shines down on them.

Jean de Pierrefeu speaks of the Southerners whom he has met at the front, and of how devoid of soul and how effeminate and cowardly he found these Levantines.

Then returning to his account of the fighting he depicts the men getting up noiselessly at dawn, their overcoats dripping with dew. All these shapeless forms lying among the bushes spring up, resolve themselves into men, and suddenly—bang! A distant shot is heard, straps are fastened, equipment tested, rifles loaded. Bang!—another shot. It is the enemy attacking the outposts as usual; and then at last it is day again, and the firing bursts out. Each man picks up his rifle, and the infernal music starts once more.

Oh! women of France and England, these are our sons, our husbands, and our relations, who are living through these horrors, enduring these privations and these frightful sufferings. And with death in

our hearts we write to them, "Do your duty, your whole duty."

The letter of a Russian mother to her son, an officer, furnishes an instance of this heroism which I wish to quote here, as our own feelings are embodied in it:

"My Son,

"Your father has been killed far away from here, near Langun, and I am sending you forth to the sacred duty of defending our dear country from a foul and terrible enemy. Remember that you are the son of a hero. My heart bleeds, and I am crying bitterly as I ask you to be worthy of him, for I know the fatal import of my words. Nevertheless, I repeat them. We are not here for all time. What is the life of a human being? A drop of water in the ocean of the life of our glorious Russia. We shall not live for ever, whereas she should have a long and prosperous existence. I know that we shall be forgotten, and that our happy descendants will forget those who sleep in a soldier's grave.

"At our parting I showered kisses and blessings upon you. When you are chosen for some gallant deed, do not think of my tears, remember only my blessings. God be with you, my dearly beloved son."

Where could one find feeling more beautiful, ideas more exalted? If we look within our own hearts we shall find them there also.

V.—STILL AT VAL ANDRÉ

October.—I go down to the convalescent hospital every morning at nine o'clock, and help the matron to dress the soldiers' wounds. I put out on the table boiling water, peroxide, pieces of cotton-wool, linen bandages, pins, and iodine, which is such an important factor in modern dressings. Then the soldiers are summoned one by one into the small room where we are, and where a bright fire is kept burning, for the patients have to undress, and must not catch cold. We chat while we are washing their wounds, for it is not a painful process. We have a soldier with a bayonet-wound in his leg, which he received at Charleroi of accursèd memory. His company was wiped out; the poor fellow next him was killed, and as he fell his bayonet, in some extraordinary way, went through his comrade's calf, and came out in front of his leg beside the shin bone.

Naturally, being run through like this, he fell, and the Germans, as they rushed over the battlefield in pursuit of the Allies, took him for dead. This is his story:

"I lay there stretched out on the ground for three

days, without anything to eat or drink; each day I pulled the bayonet in my leg a little further out. It hurt me so much to do this, that before I could bring myself to pull at the bayonet I used to tremble all over and break out into a cold sweat. In three days I managed to crawl nearly two miles to reach a field hospital. It was all right when the ground was flat, but whenever I came to the smallest hillock I had to go round it, because I could not drag myself uphill, and that made the distance a precious sight longer. At last I was picked up by the stretcher-bearers, and after that I was very well looked after!"

We were astonished by his resignation, strength of mind, and endurance. He is married, and his wife and child are in Finistère; but he talks of getting back to the front, "to kill as many of them as possible."

He also said, in talking about Charleroi:

"We knew we were bound to be slaughtered, for we were only twelve thousand against fifty thousand; but in spite of that we rushed into the firing-line like madmen, just hurled ourselves at the Germans to bayonet them, and when the bayonets broke from the violence of the shock we bit them, anywhere we could, tore out their eyes with our fingers, and kicked their legs to make them fall down. We were absolutely drunk with rage, and yet we knew that we were going to certain death. . . ."

In telling us this the little soldier looked like a

regular demon, and seemed to smell the powder again. But if we try to soothe them by talking of victory, their eyes grow soft, their features relax, and their faces shine with hope.

What a wonderful virtue hopefulness is, and how little we cultivate it! It has almost ceased to exist, except among simple souls. In those on whom Science has laid her withering finger, this humble flower of the religious life droops and dies.

And yet how sweet to be able to hope like the ignorant or like children, to shut the soul's eyes in utter trustfulness and peace, and give oneself up to hope, miraculous and superhuman!

* * * * *

October.—Days and days have gone by, and I have not had the courage to write. And what ruin piled on ruin in these few days! Arras destroyed; Lille furiously bombarded; the cathedral at Rheims burnt; crimes and horrors in profusion mingled with orgies, thefts, and pillages.

One might think that we were back in the times of Attila and the invasions of the barbarians.

Yesterday at Lamballe we met a convoy of Prussian prisoners. They were going, under a strong guard, to work on the railway. At the sight of the gang my heart leapt within me. Standing up in the car I lost all control of myself, and shouted: "Bandits, savages, assassins, down with the Kaiser!" I was

trembling with rage and emotion to think that here I had before my eyes those brutes who had killed women and children, girls and old men, for no reason at all—simply for the pleasure of killing.

My friends were as much moved as I was, and even after the prisoners had passed we kept on shouting, "À bas l'Allemagne," and "Vive la France!"

They marched by, unmoved, with a contemptuous and disdainful expression on their brutal faces. Only a very few of them looked as if they came from a decent class—the rest were savages. Really, when one is near them, one feels a regular surge of hate.

* * * * *

October.—According to the communiqués they keep on driving back the Germans in the North, but as we do not understand these tactics we don't put too much faith in them. It seems the Germans very nearly got to Paris. After the defeat at Charleroi they advanced with incredible speed, and soon reached Compiègne; Paris went crazy; there was a great meeting of the Government and heads of Departments, and Galiéni was asked to undertake the defence of Paris. He answered:

"I will not take upon myself the defence of a city whose forts are not even supplied with guns; moreover, the Prussians will be here within forty-eight hours."

There was general consternation.

Turning to Pau and Joffre, who were present,

Galiéni said: "If Joffre will undertake to hold the enemy back for a single week at Compiègne and along the line, at the end of that time Pau will be able to send me the troops from the East, the entrenched army will be reinforced, and I shall be able to put the forts into a defensive condition."

The plan worked. It is not known why the Germans remained stationary for three days at Compiègne; they were expecting reinforcements under the Crown Prince which did not arrive, and fearing a trap beyond Compiègne they withdrew and we were saved!

But what is one to think of such a Government? What view can one hold of politicians capable of such improvidence; and how startling a confirmation of what Senator Humbert was pointing out to us shortly before the war!

* * * * *

October.—So changeless is the situation that one no longer feels inclined to write. The communiqués are depressingly monotonous. The Germans have bombarded Ypres and retaken Dixmude; a week later we retake Dixmude, and are nearing Ypres. For the moment Calais is the enemy's objective; having failed to get to Paris, they want to go by Calais to England.

The surprising thing is that our men are not discouraged by the slowness of this mole-like warfare so alien to the nature of the French soldier.

A young Breton peasant wrote lately to his father:

"We take trenches from the Germans when they are still full of corpses, so crowded together that it is like sardines in a box. We can only go in when everything has been burnt, and even so the stench is so strong that we often have to make a second gallery alongside."

Can anything more awful be imagined?

* * * * *

November.—Winter is coming on and the fighting continues. There are a great many more English now, and when our soldiers need rest the English take their places. The Russian Army is before Cracow, which has been abandoned by the civil population.

It is announced that Lord Roberts is going to pay a visit to the front. The courage and energy of this old man of eighty-two are magnificent. The soldiers are preparing a great reception for him, for in spite of everything, they are gay in the trenches. The French soon learn to put up with things that can't be cured. They arrange the trenches like barrack dormitories, and family portraits are hung beside German helmets, bits of shell, and various things taken from prisoners or enemy dead.

The Germans have been badly defeated on the Yser; on the Aisne their attacks have failed; and we are driving them back in the Vosges. In their rage they have again bombarded Rheims, also Soissons and Lille, which to be sure they have not ceased to bombard since hostilities began.

We ask each other if the Kaiser is not out of his mind to go on with the war.

* * * * *

November.—Yesterday we were sitting round the fire talking to the Master.

"They say that the Kaiser is selling his castle in Corfu. Did you read that? What do you think of it?"

"I think that, being unable to realize his hopes, he is trying to realize his property," said Drumont.

"That is a witticism, and I should have preferred a thought!"

"Why, no, my dear, it's not a witticism. The Kaiser is like an insolvent banker who, seeing the approach of the inevitable crash, wants to liquidate his property before packing up and absconding.

"He wishes to convert his title deeds into hard cash, and he is beginning with his country-seat in Corfu, the famous Achilleion of this fierce and sinister buffoon."

"When he bought it, did not people say that it was the beginning of encroachments on the Mediterranean?"

"People say such a lot of silly things. As if the Kaiser settling in the Empress of Austria's villa could have the least effect on the operations of the British Mediterranean Fleet! My opinion is that he bought Achilleion in order to get the fresh, salubrious

air he needs, because of the hereditary and incurable disease he suffers from."

"It is quite true people always look for some abstruse explanation of the simplest facts."

"And perhaps, who knows? destiny may have been giving him an object lesson to think over; in that statue of the wounded Achilles, may he not have seen a symbol of evil augury? At the hour when this robber-chief unleashed the catastrophe from which we are all suffering, he perhaps foresaw that his Empire might some day receive a deadly wound like the Greek hero."

"Yes, it was a presentiment; but it seems an odious thing to sell that palace to any chance tradesman who has made money."

"It is shameful but characteristic of that creature of show and bluff, the crowned maniac who, for fear of seeing his castle confiscated, puts it up for auction between two fits of bloodthirsty rage and two incoherent orders to his General Staff. In fact the Imperial madman's business instincts are coming to the surface, and it is to the Swiss hotel-keepers that he turns in the hope of palming off his palace on them. All that is atrociously bad taste."

* * * * *

November.—I raced down the street this morning in a bitter north-west wind. I was going down to the convalescent hospital. Some more wounded arrived yesterday.

One of the earlier ones had got leave to go and see his father at Lamballe. I was wondering if he had got back. His shoulder had nearly healed, but it would have been a pity for him to get a temperature again for the sake of a few hours out.

I arrived in the reading-room, and saw at a glance that he had not returned. I could feel P.'s displeasure as he walked to and fro, grumbling at the truant.

"You see —— not come in . . . may get me into trouble with the military authorities. . . . I am responsible." And he fussed round.

The Matron and I began our daily work. The big patient with a bullet in the region of the heart had had a bad night.

As soon as he lay down he was unable to breathe, and then he could neither raise himself nor sit up in bed without feeling the point of the bullet going further in—it must be an awful feeling.

"You should call to your companions to help you," said the Matron, "for making an effort like that might do you a lot of harm."

"Oh no! I prefer to let them sleep; they need it; they don't get much chance in the trenches!"

The Matron and I looked at each other, touched by this delicacy, and the soldier went on:

"What I feel now is nothing. Do you know that with this bullet next my heart I went from Charleroi to the hospital at Bordeaux, without any sort of dress-

ing, lying on straw in a truck in a heat fit to split you. The journey lasted a week, and you can imagine that the jolts and bumps of the train did not help to bring the bullet out."

At this juncture we heard voices raised in anger. It was the missing man returning and exchanging far from complimentary remarks with the House Governor. The soldier was answering very insolently.

He came into the dressing-room, and we saw at a glance that he was drunk.

However, he said good-morning to us, and began to undress, not very successfully. Besides being hampered in his movements by his wounded shoulder, his lack of equilibrium bothered him dreadfully.

We chatted as we helped him.

"You must have been drinking all night," said the Matron, "for you are still full of drink this morning."

"That's right . . . never went to bed . . . drank and sang all night."

"In fact, you had a regular old beano ?"

"Yes; and then we heard that my brother had been killed, so we kept on at it."

"Ah! so that's the way you mourn for your brother."

"Mourn! But he's been dead for more than a month. You see, we only heard last night, but it happened a month ago. You see one does not mourn after a month, there. Besides, it's the war. What!"

The Matron and I had great difficulty in not laughing at this Breton, a true type of his race.

When his shoulder had been dressed and his arm tied up he walked out of the room a little straighter.

The House-Governor has decided that there shall be no more leave henceforward.

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November.—Nothing could be more gloomy and depressing than the town of St. Brieuc. It is situated on the summit of a rock, and built of granite, with narrow streets like alleys, where one cannot stir an inch without meeting wounded. As for its inhabitants, they have been infected by the town, they also are made of granite. Hard, sullen, and wild, incapable of any feeling, they hate and detest strangers on the sly, but wear a hypocritical expression of pity. The sight of all these soldiers and wounded, of whom their town is full, forces them to think of the war, but the only point they can see in it is that it is good for trade.

"Well, it must be true that there is a war, with such a lot of people in the hospitals; something must be happening for sure."

"You did not believe it before?"

"Well, perhaps we did, but we're such a long way off!"

"One would not believe that you are French to hear you talking."

And we hastened to get away as far as we could from this specimen of patriotism. On the road we met some English wounded soldiers, very tired after a long walk. We made room for them in the car, and our host, who is American by birth and speaks English, talked to them, to their great delight.

"Are you comfortable at St. Brieuc?"

"Oh yes, very; some of the residents are looking after us very well, and we are luckily in a family which is not too Breton."

"Ah! you know what they are like already?"

"Oh yes. Some of them say to us, 'Why don't you go home to your own country when you are wounded?' It is absolutely typical, as you say in France."

"Yes, it is certainly very typical; and what do you answer back?"

"Oh, nothing, we just make a note of the remark. What would be the good of answering? They would not understand."

We drove them back to their temporary dwelling-place, and they thanked us heartily. We asked them some questions about the war, but they suddenly became very laconic, and we understood.

The communiqués are all alike and all depressing. Paul is still at Dijon; his request for another aeroplane in order to come to Paris and fight the Taubes

has been granted, but he has not got his orders to go yet.

We were chatting as usual yesterday evening round the fire; outside it was raining and very squally, as it often is on the Breton coast.

The fire was blazing cheerfully in our friends' big fireplace, and filling the room with a pleasant warmth, and the reflection of its flames shone and danced on the parquet floor.

We were discussing, with a thrill of retrospective horror, what would have happened if the Boches had entered poor ill-defended Paris.

" Did you see their entry into Paris in '70, Master ?" said Mme. P.

" Oh yes; and I, too, have known a gloomy Paris without any lights. I used to go about in the icy mist in my National Guard képi, and wrapped up to the ears in a muffler, and the unlighted streets looked as if they belonged to some miserable village. There was no gas during the siege, that was why we had no lights."

" But did you see the Germans enter Paris ?"

" Oh dear ! What can I tell you about that that you have not already read ! They did not make a proud triumphal entry by any means. They had to go round the Arc de Triomphe, for its arch was blocked by the scaffolding which had been put up to protect its wonderful bas-reliefs.

"I was standing on the edge of the pavement with a friend. The Champs Élysées, with all the big houses entirely shut up, looked most lugubrious. The old Kaiser and his staff occupied the house which stood where Dufayel's house stands now, and he was watching his troops as they gloomily marched past. They only went as far as the Place de la Concorde, and camped all along the Champs Élysées. The Parisians were admirably dignified and restrained.

"The Germans only saw a very small bit of Paris, in fact, and they went off again two days later, I think. It was only as they were going that a jeering crowd followed them with brooms and disinfectants. Our street arabs never lose a chance."

"And how did you spend Christmas the year of the war and the siege?"

"Very sadly, like the one we shall be spending next month. All the same, we bought a goose before the siege, little thinking that it would become almost historical. We fed it with the greatest difficulty, which never fattened anyone, not even a goose.

"One day we ran out of corn. I had to go to a place behind the Hôtel de Ville to get some more, and at that time I lived at Les Ternes. It was no good thinking of trying to take any sort of vehicle, there weren't any, and I had to go on foot, though the cold was absolutely Siberian. This was a few days before Christmas. The shopman gave me several

pounds of corn in a paper bag, and I started for home, thinking of the warm welcome the goose would give me when it saw me bringing food. It was a heavy load, and I had great difficulty in walking on the hard frozen snow; the thermometer was well below zero, and I was making tremendous efforts not to slip and fall. A little way beyond the Rond Point in the Champs Élysées I became aware that my hands were quite numb. I instinctively pressed the bag closely to me. This precipitated the tragedy. The bag burst, and its entire contents were instantly strewn all over the snow.

"Greatly distressed, I knelt down in the snow and tried very clumsily, owing to the numbness of my hands, to pick up the corn; but the birds, famished by months of siege, swooped down upon it from all sides, and fought furiously with me to prevent me.

"They hopped on my hands, perched on my head and back, pecking me while their companions laid in large stores, chirping the while, which brought down fresh clouds of them. I was defeated, and left them in possession."

"Your return home can't have been particularly funny."

"No. I never went home so ruefully. My sister was much disappointed, and decided to kill the goose, and invited some friends to share the feast."

"Did they stop the bombardment on Christmas Eve?"

"That would have shown too much delicacy of feeling. Their Kultur did not go as far as that."

"Did you go out that night, Master?"

"Yes. I went to see a friend who was on duty on the fortifications, and take him something warming. In the dark and mysterious firmament above me there was a continuous roar, interrupted every now and then by violent explosions. There were momentary pauses, and when the guns were quiet and the dogs of war ceased to bark there was silence—a very brief silence, unhappily, but complete and absolute while it lasted, and the impression it made in the deep darkness of that night was profoundly solemn and tragic."

"We feel as though we were there. . . ."

"During one of these quiet spells, I suddenly heard the faint sound of a church-bell, then of a second, then of a third, and I remembered it was Christmas night. They were being rung faintly and timidly, and sounded like cowbells on a mountain-side. On that terrible night of bombardment, floating over all human miseries and over all the horrors and atrocities (which, I must own, fell far short of those of to-day), the sweet, soft bells were trying to repeat the angels' message to the shepherds: 'Peace on earth and goodwill toward men.'"

"It was bitter irony."

"Yes, but I shall never forget how unutterably sad I felt."

* * * * *

November.—We have been to Lamballe, for it was market-day. There was a little more animation than usual in the dull, sad little town.

Bretons, who looked as if they had been cut out of the rock their cliffs are made of, were going round in their large felt hats.

The women were not wearing those large white head-dresses, which stand out over their faces like nuns' caps; but flat caps which come in close round their face and hang down over their shoulders, the two ends being caught up and pinned at the back of their heads. Here, as everywhere in Brittany, the faces are all alike. The people move slowly and talk very little. They go from one stall to another, standing for a long time in silence before the thing they want to buy, doubtless calculating what it is worth, what the salesman will ask for it, and finally what they will offer.

We bought woollen materials for the soldiers and eatables for the hospital.

A group of Breton women were standing waiting for the diligence to start. They had finished their marketing and were loaded with parcels. We listened to their talk: "At what time does the diligence arrive?" (There is still one at Lamballe.)

"That depends: generally at ten o'clock," a man answered.

"No, at eleven o'clock," said another.

" At twelve o'clock," said an old fishwife.

" At one o'clock."

" At half-past one."

" Often it does not arrive till two o'clock."

" It has no regular hour," said a woman who had not spoken up till then. (We felt quite convinced of that.)

" Perhaps it won't come at all to-day."

" Lord ! the man may have gone to the war."

" That wouldn't be no joke ! How on earth should we get home ?" And the talk began again.

At last the noise of a vehicle, the trot of a horse, and the cracking of a whip were heard, and the St. Brieuc diligence emerged into the square.

Buried under the parcels, baskets, and bags which covered his box, the driver was hunched up like a monkey. The harness was tied together with string, and its greasy leather was covered with the dust from the roads. Pieces of rope and bright bits of rag hung down everywhere. With the horse covered with sores and shaking its bells, and the man cracking his whip, the whole thing formed a picture fit for the brush of Callot. Instantly all these quacking ducks who had been waiting for more than an hour for the diligence plunged into it pell-mell, getting in each other's way, not finding any room, and shouting at each other in Breton—not too politely, judging by the tone. At last things quieted down: each one took her place

and settled in it, to wait for at least an hour, until the driver had had his lunch and felt inclined to go on.

It was really worth seeing, and quite difficult to imagine in these days of motor-buses, cars, and railways.

On our way home, we saw the German prisoners again on the road, putting down rails for a tramway, which is to run from Val André to St. Brieuc through Lamballe. That is progress!

Paul has written. He is leaving Dijon at last. General N. has been appointed to the command of the air service; so things will go better now.

"We are going to Paris, or at least to Villacoublay, where we shall form a guard to defend Paris from the Taubes.

"You know, Mother, that I can't stay mouldering there, and that I shall try to get sent to the front. I am so pleased to be moving. When I pass through the station of Moret in the early morning, and see 'Les Sablons' and the garden of 'La Chaumine,' I shall feel it deeply; but it is not an emotion that will do me any harm. I shall say to myself that I too have got a little corner of the earth to defend, like all the other men who are fighting, a corner that you live in and love, and where those brigands must never set their foot.

"That, you see, is what makes us so strong and energetic in this war. Because each soldier makes this

vast war his own war, each of us has a personal hatred of the enemy, and deeply resents his brutal invasion and the savage oppression of recent years, during which we have felt that even our own country does not belong to us. As soon as I arrive I will wire to you. Come back as soon as you can; for I think you will be safer now; and besides, I know you, and feel sure you will soon be back and will come to Paris without delay.

"At last we are going to do something.

"My best love, dear Mother. Give my kind remembrances to all our friends.

"PAUL."

VI.—THE RETURN

At lunch to-day I put forward the idea of going back to Paris soon. At first everyone disapproved of it, the Master most of all, for he remembered the journey coming here, and had no desire to go through the same experiences on the way back.

"And then one never knows: they are still so near Paris—if they swept down on it suddenly. . . ."

"No, not now. Everyone says there is no more fear of that."

"Everyone said that they would not get into France."

"But we can't stay here for ever. It is very cold. Our friends' house was built for the summer, and is very difficult to keep warm. Well, if we can find a car to take us back, will you come?"

"Oh! in a car it would be different."

Some feminine instinct warned me to close the discussion at that point. I have really got what I wanted, and must not spoil my chance by insisting. That evening, when I went to my room, I said to myself, "In a week we shall be starting."

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November.—If we were not living through such tragic times, if one's mind were not so full of painful thoughts,

and could rest and enjoy any happiness, we should find this corner of Brittany charming in its strange beauty.

When I wake up at night, and recent happenings, the disasters in the North and the sufferings of our soldiers in the trenches, pass before my eyes like a Dance of Death; when the thought of my son is a painful obsession, and sleep forsakes me; I get up and go to the window, and look through the clear night at the stars and the lighthouses, at Portrieux, and on the bay of the Somme; I listen to the lapping of the waves, and my head and my heart and my whole being are refreshed by the wonderful sea. From time to time there comes a breath of air, long-drawn and soft like a sigh of love or a child's caress. Everyone is asleep, and I breathe in the smell of the seaweed as it waves its sticky streamers. Soon I feel tired, as the fresh air goes through and through me, and I go back to rest. How can one have such beautiful nights when there is so much suffering!

In the daytime I like to wander off—nowhere in particular—as the fancy takes me, or where my feet carry me, thinking and dreaming without anyone to listen to me, without the sound of footsteps following me, as free as though I were in the desert, as I wander over the firm sand at low tide. I have often been able to gratify this whim.

For all these things I shall regret Val André and have a pleasant recollection of it.

We went to buy some salt butter to take to Paris. The farmer's wife who sold it us had a beard, a skirt which came only a short way below her knees, and a cap as large and flat as a plate, from which a piece of stuff hung down, a sort of flap to protect the nape of her neck.

I must say I was staggered by this apparition. All the same, she was very interesting when she told us about her three sons at the front. "The two eldest are married," she said, "and as they had already left home I don't miss them so much. But the youngest one worked with me, he managed the farm, and I cannot get accustomed to his being away, for we miss him at every turn."

Seeing us looking at her cap, she went on:

"After we were married I wanted to give up my cap, and I asked my late husband if he would consent to it. He said: 'Whether you keep your cap or whether you take it off, I shall be able to pick you out all right from all the others.'"

She told us this with a sort of pride. I noticed then that she had magnificent black eyes, which had once had their charm.

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November.—At last we are packing up, and our hosts are leaving at the same time as we are.

Since the battle of the Yser, where we routed the Germans, our friends have felt more confident, and no

longer fear the menace to Paris. I have found a chauffeur, and we shall make the return journey by short stages, so as not to tire the Master and to avoid tiresome breakdowns.

Our itinerary for the first day is to lunch at Dinan and dine at Mont S. Michel.

I received a charming letter to-day from the little fiancée. She had been at her place in the South, but as soon as she heard that the airmen had returned to Paris, she and one of her relatives went to stay with an uncle at Asnières. I fancied she would try to come up. And I've felt a little real happiness for the first time since the war started at the thought of seeing them both again. If only Paul has not already gone!

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December.—After a few days of preparation and oiling and pumping of tyres, and polishing up, Françoise —that is the car—came round to the door of the villa, got up looking as if she were going to a Review, with the flags of the Allies, the Red Cross, and the P.'s American flag.

The Master got in, still grousing a little; then we took our places. When we got to Dinan, Drumont said: "Shall we sleep in Paris to-night?"

"Not quite, Master," said Mme. P.; "in two or three days."

There was silence.

Dinan stands on a hill which from the foot looked

inaccessible for a car. Streets full of wounded soldiers, houses turned into temporary hospitals, a very old church and hideous streets, and a bitter, icy wind which cut our faces—such is my memory of it. The restaurant was very bad, so was the lunch, and we got back into the car not feeling very pleased with our first stopping-place.

"If it's like this every day it's going to be cheerful," said Drumont. "But, my dear P., why are we going to Mont St. Michel? Why don't we go straight back to Paris?"

"Obviously, Master, if we could go straight back we should do so, but we can't do three hundred and seventy-five miles in one day."

"Ah yes, that's true."

And a moment later:

"All the same, it's an odd freak to go to Mont St. Michel."

We drove on, and at six o'clock saw Pontorson and Mont St. Michel, which kept appearing and disappearing at the turns in the road.

The mole was reached at last. At the end of it we found ourselves facing the old turrets of the encircling wall. We got out, and I wondered anxiously how Drumont would take having to go down the wooden footbridge which leads to the postern. I left the task of persuading him to our friend P., and he was most successful. To my surprise I saw Drumont walk

down it leaning on P.'s arm, and pass through the postern gate leading into the fortress.

Mme. Poulard's hôtel is quite near; we went in and warmed ourselves before a vast fireplace, in which a big fire of vine-branches was burning, which cheered us up a little. After an excellent dinner, the Poulard omelette having proved worthy of its reputation, Drumont went to his room, while our friends and I went out to enjoy the view of the Mount.

I shall never forget the scene that night. When we came out of Mme. Poulard's alley, we went to the postern which opens on to a sort of rather marshy strand. We passed thus from the total darkness of the Mount into the bright moonlight which was lighting up the vast expanse. We went up on to the causeway, and walked a short distance so as to see the Mount from a little way off.

It was magnificent. From top to bottom the Mount was bathed in light. Gulls and night-birds were flying from the towers and the edge of the *mâchicoulis*, uttering faint cries which in no way jarred upon the wondrous silence. We had a view of the roofs forming an amphitheatre, the ivy growing on the walls, the gentle incline of the single street which winds round the centre of the rock like the steps of a staircase, and the dark arches into which the light only penetrates through loopholes. In the pure moonlight the outlines of that marvel of medieval architecture showed up like an etching.

We were spellbound and speechless with admiration, For my part, without exactly thinking about anything or mentally trying to put my thoughts into words, I was in a dream of chain armour, flexible as a glove, of buff baldricks, of closed visors through which shone fiery eyes, of night attacks by desperate, yelling men, torches setting the walls ablaze, axes and cloven heads, and monks rushing distractedly to defend their Mount against the English foe. Thus in my reverie I enjoyed the most priceless gift granted to man—memory. And what air! What pure air! And what a wide expanse there was before us. Ah! since our souls are suffocating and perishing in the grip of this war, since our minds are held fast in this pillory, and are perpetually thrown back upon themselves, as they dash against this wall, let our nostrils at least breathe in the perfume of all the winds of the sea, and let our eyes stray from horizon to horizon.

The Mount seemed to have come to life in the clear light, and we did not think of going in. However, it had to be done, so we wended our way back to the low dark postern.

A Customs Officer was on guard at the postern—guarding what? we wondered; and I thought of the nickname they have been given—"The Guardians of the Moon." It was certainly appropriate on this occasion.

When I got back to the hôtel I could not sleep for

a long time, I was still so full of the beauty of the things I had just been seeing.

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December.—The next day we lunched at Mortain and slept at Domfront. It was a change of scene. Mortain is very ordinary, Domfront is situated in the midst of strange, wild-looking country of a type most unusual in France.

Some officers were lunching at the same hôtel. The dreariness of the country affected me, and I was unable to eat any dinner, and full of inexplicable anxiety. I was afraid of getting home too late and finding that my son had gone. I felt that the car was not getting along at all. My friends and I went round the town after dinner. It was very dark, all the shops were shut, and an icy wind blew down the narrow streets. We felt as if we were miles from anywhere, and hurried back to the hotel, intent only on going to sleep and getting on to the next day.

Drumont, whom we found playing cards, said to us:

"Well, is Domfront a beautiful place?"

"Horrible—a black hole with no lights anywhere."

"I had a presentiment it would be so," said the Master. "Are we going to stop at many such places?"

"No, no, one more day and we shall be there."

I could not sleep that night. The wind was very violent, and blew a signboard, which I had noticed

as we arrived, backwards and forwards. It creaked and groaned on such a plaintive note that it filled my mind with mournful fancies. It was of enormous size—in the daylight one saw a sword six feet high, a boot as large as a hogshead, and a spur as wide as a coach-wheel on it. Judging by the size of these objects, the people at the time when the signboard was made must have been giants. And they must also have been heavy sleepers, which I am not. At last the rough wind ceased to blow, the signboard to creak, and I went to sleep.

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Second Day.—We lunched in C.'s constituency. The restaurant was full of officers and the country of soldiers. The hotel-keeper was pretentious. With his napkin under his arm he appeared to think he was already a minister. Well, a napkin would do as well as a portfolio! When he discovered that the gentleman who walked with such difficulty and had such bad sight was Edouard Drumont, he bustled round our table with his professional smile, inquired if we were satisfied and if the meat were raw enough—Drumont never eats overdone meat—and entered into conversation with our friend P.

"I hope your humbug of a member does something for you."

"Well, yes, there is a big depot here. You know *he* arranged that it should be in his constituency because it always improves trade. . . ."

The chauffeur came to tell us that the car was ready. There was a great pushing back of chairs and tables to allow the Master to pass, and many inquisitive and sympathetic eyes followed him from the room. We came out on to the small square where C.'s house is.

While Drumont was getting into the car and settling himself down, Mme. P. and I went to look at C.'s house. It is a very plain one, only one story high, with a balcony of cast-iron over the entrance archway, and that's all. It does not look very grand, but it is out of the ordinary.

The engine vibrated, the car bounded forward, and we started again. All the people in the restaurant came out and waved to the Master. They were pleased—they had seen Drumont in C.'s country, which was by no means an everyday sight.

As we left Mamers we said: "We shall sleep at Chartres to-night. It is a long stretch, but we must do it. We must all put up with it, and to-morrow we shall be at Les Sablons."

It was a most pleasant journey for me and my friends. But having to keep still is always fatal to Drumont, as his legs soon become paralyzed. We rolled on between fields, through valleys, and over plains, and enjoyed the intoxicating sensation of continuous speed, which yet did not tire us. We were full of animation, and every nerve in our bodies seemed instinct with health and vigour. While racing

thus along the road, one seemed to absorb everything—colour, light, air, and the scenery around one. One's soul revelled in a wealth of manifold and complex sensations. Some effluence from nature itself seemed to reach us and to assimilate itself with us. By means of this strange blending one understands nature better, but whether the feeling is objective or subjective it is hard to say.

But we were only meant to absorb a little nourishment, a few sounds, a few feelings, a few ideas, each day. When one exceeds these small doses one becomes tired and overwrought. Ah! why is our glass so small when our thirst is so great!

The last bit of the run was very cold. I was in the front of the car, and my face and hands were frozen before we got to Chartres; but the view of Chartres, and its cathedral appearing through the mist in a luminous halo, made me forget the cold. It seemed as if we were seeing a phantom cathedral in the distance. We remembered Rheims, and were plunged in sadness.

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The Same Day.—At last we got to Chartres, worn-out, weary and sick of motoring; but we were soon restored by the warmth of the restaurant and a good dinner; and the company of an officer whom we met, an old friend of ours, soon made us sociable again. We talked . . . about the war. This officer's son, aged

eighteen, has been at the front since the very beginning, and is full of courage. The father was much moved as he told us this. He comes from Soissons, and told us that he had an old grandfather and grandmother who lived in that part in comparative ease. When the invasion took place they fled, but before going they buried all their money on their property, in spite of everyone advising them not to do so. There you have the real peasant—they cannot tear themselves away from the land, and when they leave it they entrust to it their most precious possessions.

This officer had wanted all his life to know Drumont, and when he met him at Coppée's funeral he was enchanted. He expressed in the most exquisite and touching words his sincere pleasure at having again met him, on the steps of the hotel, in the midst of such tragic events.

In spite of the great cold we went out that evening after dinner, and walked round the cathedral. The little streets that wind round this magnificent church were full of mystery and of the atmosphere of the Middle Ages that evening. They were quite empty in the moonlight, and cold and silent as the canals of Bruges. One scarcely dared go through them, and hurried along to avoid disturbing their solitude, not even venturing to speak above a whisper. Oh! what a delightful walk! We read the communiqué put up in the square as we returned to the hôtel, where we

found Drumont finishing a game of cards with his friend P.

What happy memories we have gleaned on our return journey !

Finally, Les Sablons, the house, the dogs, and those good things we loved so much, which one thought lost, but which one comes to again. How melancholy, yet sweet, is the joy of our return !

VII.—LES SABLONS. END OF 1914

December.—It was six o'clock when we and our friends got out of the car and went up the steps of the Villa des Sablons. That dear house which I had left so sorrowfully, and where in imagination I had seen the Prussians committing, as elsewhere, every kind of outrage, that pretty little wood in which when we came to the house a year ago we made so many plans and dreamed so many delightful dreams of a quiet life — every familiar object gave us unutterable pleasure.

I asked for my dogs. They came tearing along like mad things, and Sultan, who had grown a great deal, jumped upon me and put his paws on my shoulders.

They ran round and round us, looking at us anxiously as if they were saying, "Are you going off again?" Drumont went straight to his writing-table, where he found his pen and paper just as he had left them. He sat down in his armchair. The fresh smell of the garden in the evening air came through the half-open window. He was glad to be back.

"I am sure you are no longer tired."

"No, I am not even sorry at having made the journey. After all, what a lot of things happen in three months; and how one can see in all these events the working of fate and destiny! There are times when God turns away from the nations who have misused the most precious gifts, and whose development in this world is finished.

"But perhaps He will not go on punishing for ever, and it seems to me that He has already stretched out His hand to us."

"At any rate He has allowed us to see our house again, and we thank Him for doing so. Come along, my good P., the dining-room is calling us and the hot soup invites us."

I feel calm and almost happy, knowing I am so near my son. I have already planned to go to Paris to see him.

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December.—A few days of rest without anything happening. The entire procedure on both sides seems to consist in advancing, retiring, and re-taking the positions they had abandoned. In fact, as days go by the war becomes less and less comprehensible.

The trenches are mostly full of water, and the soldiers move about in them like sewer-men. Everyone has been stirred by it. Women have knitted mufflers and socks by thousands, and sent them to the front. But the poor soldiers do not always receive

them. I know someone at the Gare de l'Est who is on this duty. He goes off with a train in which every van is full of woollen things. He gets to some station or other as near to the front as he can, and all the bales are thrown out on the station platform. Numerous motor buses are there to take these packages up into the firing-line. But there are not enough, and most of the packages remain on the platform waiting to be fetched. The train leaves again for Paris, and as soon as there is no one left to look after them, it is to be presumed that a good many bales disappear; there is so much poverty everywhere! Of fighting there is none to record. The war goes on harassing and depressing those far away from it as well as those near it.

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December.—I decided to spend Christmas Eve with my son, since Fate had willed that he should still be near Paris. I went to my brother's in Paris. I was there by four o'clock. At six the bell rang. It was Paul. There are some joys that baffle description, and I felt fully rewarded for all my sorrow and anxiety. He was quite well and very bronzed, which showed up his blue eyes.

We talked.

"So you are at B.?"

"Yes, Mother, we are there to practise with the new machines we have been given, for in order to

make us really effective it has been necessary to drop the X aeroplanes and to take over Y's. So having given up the machines which we have been piloting so long, and which we had thoroughly in hand, we shall need some time to get accustomed to the new ones. There are always complications over everything. Meanwhile the Taubes come over Paris and throw down their bom-bombs on us."

"And you may have falls practising on those new machines?"

"Certainly—there have been two already. But don't worry, I shall manage to get back the X, for I know that its inventor has been complaining to the military authorities, and wishes to know why it has been systematically rejected."

"Well, my boy, when do you expect to go off, since you have applied to go to D.?"

"Oh, you know that, do you?" And turning to his uncle: "Ah! someone has been letting the cat out of the bag. I shan't tell you anything another time. Well, I belong to a squadron which we will call Y.Z., and when it has been completely formed, we shall go. It may take a fortnight or a month, it depends on whether the weather is clear or foggy."

"Where are you living?"

"Near V., where we are billeted. Only there were eighty of us, and only sixty houses which could take us. So they said to us: 'Those who have not been

able to get billets must fend for themselves, but no one is to go out of V. under any circumstances. So we are obliged to sleep out of doors, which is a bit chilly; or to go further afield in spite of orders, and put up at some pot-house, not too far, so as to be at the roll-call every morning at seven o'clock."

"But you have got leave this evening?"

"Yes. Oh! I'm not taking any risks. I don't forget that we are at war."

We spent the evening talking over old days, telling each other what had happened since we parted, and sitting in silence—silence being sometimes the most eloquent expression of what one is feeling.

Pierre, my brother's son, came from his barracks to see me. He looked splendid in his cuirassier's uniform; he is only eighteen, and his young face was in pathetic contrast with those manly trappings.

We recalled a dinner-party in the garden at Les Sablons last July, when war was spoken of, and said to be impossible because no one would dare to take the responsibility.

In reality we were trembling at the shadow of coming events as a horse trembles at a shadow cast on the road. A vague foreboding of calamity weighed upon us all. And now here stood these two handsome youths, our beloved sons, talking to us with sparkling eyes of trenches, aeroplanes, guns, and shells, and fretting with impatience. Oh! the war!

"You see, Mother dear, war is like influenza, smallpox, or the plague. One must go through with it without paying too much attention to it, one must get along in spite of it. There are men to defend you on the frontier. But you must think of them with admiration, without crying and getting depressed."

Like all people with fine characters, Paul is above all pettiness of feeling; entirely absorbed in the happiness of fighting for his country, he neither sees nor understands anything else.

People are again talking of Japanese intervention. Our sons are of opinion that it would be useless, and then one must think of how impossible it is to convey hundreds and thousands of men across the sea like that.

"It would be madness."

"I am with you, Corporal pilot," said Pierre. "Let us leave them where they are—I, too, say they are 'undesirable.'"

Nevertheless: Everything comes, as Talleyrand said; the point is to live. This question of Japan which has been started has now become public property, and before it disappears or takes definite shape it will cause any amount of ink-slinging, as they say.

At midnight we thought we would go to Mass, but out of doors we could not even distinguish the pavement from the street, it was so dark. As no

lights are allowed, it is quite dangerous to go out at night. So we went back home. Christmas was over.

* * * * *

December.—We have settled down again. I have had both the upper and lower drawing-rooms closed, for fear that reopening them should bring us bad luck. Some pictures are still stowed away, and will remain so. My staff is much reduced—one maid and a charwoman. By cutting down expenses like this I shall be able to take some comforts to the invalids in hospital.

I began on Sunday. I went with a friend to visit the hospital at Bleaux. We had an ample supply of cigarettes, and the patients were very glad to see us.

A word or two of chat by their bedside pleases them, and it was astonishing how calmly they answered our questions.

"I have had both my legs off," said one.

"A fragment of shell smashed my right arm," said another.

A third had had his cheeks pierced by a bullet, which had perforated his palate and cut his tongue. One feels impressed and overwhelmed at the sight of so much suffering so bravely borne. And if you go back in a week or a fortnight to visit your wounded, you find that the surgeons have done wonders—not, of course, for limbs that have been lost for ever, but

they have mended the palate, the tongue, and the cheeks, so that the unfortunate man can eat and talk; they have re-made a nose by grafting human flesh on to it; transfused blood into organs which were getting into a state of dissolution; in short everywhere surgery has all but performed miracles. Medicine lags behind.

To reach the room where the wounded were, we had to pass another room whose doors were shut, but one could see the men in it through the glass.

" Take a good look as you go by this room," said my friend; " it is the wounded Germans' ward; look especially at the bed on the left."

A slight shudder went down my back as I approached the door. A few men were standing about; they were heavy and thickset, looked fierce, bestial, and gloomy, and moved slowly. The others were in bed, and I looked at the bed on the left. I saw a quite young man in it; he was very fair and very thin, and his face was drawn with suffering; he was reading the Bible. When we had had a good look at him we went on, and I asked the young woman who was with me why she had pointed him out to me.

" Well," she said, " that unfortunate man arrived here wounded in ten places. One morning I was going along to the ward where the French with very serious wounds are, and carrying some excellent chocolate and coffee which I had made for them, when I met the Matron, who said to me:

" ' Mme. F., you don't go to the Germans, do you ?'

" ' No, sister.'

" ' And yet, if I were to tell you that there is an unfortunate boy in there, oh, so young ! whose body has been tortured by the doctors, and that they have just operated on him for the fourth time; and that he is so weak that a cup of coffee would do him an immense amount of good, what would you do ?'

" ' Sister, I should follow you.'

" ' Oh, I am so glad !' exclaimed the sister; ' come along at once !'

" And I took my coffee to the wounded German's bedside. I admit I felt a certain amount of repugnance, and a flood of thoughts passed through my mind. I saw our women and young girls violated, shot, murdered and torn to pieces by these villains, and the cup rattled in the saucer.

" At the noise he opened his eyes, and in a feeble voice which shook a little I heard myself saying to him:

" ' Would you like a nice cup of hot coffee ? It will do you good.'

" I went near him.

" His eyes were fixed on me; then they fell on the cup, and he leant forward timidly. I helped him to drink. When he had finished he sank back on his pillow, took my hand, and pressing it with all his might said to me in French:

" ' Thank you, oh, thank you,' and then he began to sob.

" I left the room hastily, as I felt quite capable of doing the same, and did not want him to see me."

As she finished her story, Mme. F. pointed out a soldier to me who had been trepanned. He shook hands with her as he passed; he was all right again, and was going back to the depot.

When we came out of this inferno of suffering it was quite a relief to breathe the pure air again and see the sky.

" What is the news at Bleau ?" said Drumont when I got back.

" Nothing. Many sick and wounded, and the streets are full of Territorials: they have their wives and children with them, which won't make them more eager to go to the front; in short, the town is very much alive and yet gloomy."

" So no one can see the end of things yet ?"

" No one, but of course I know nothing about it."

" Yes, one asks oneself from what direction, from what point of the compass, the future will come. This is not a propitious moment to prophesy. What can one say as to the results of a war where men fight like moles, and only the dead are exposed to the light of day ?"

He thought a moment, and then he added:

" We must wait. The mistakes by which the end

will be decided have not yet been made. And we have no clue to the catastrophes which will bring about the supreme crisis. I feel convinced that something will happen which is not in the Kaiser's programme."

"I think as you do, Master; but while waiting for this development, we must distract our minds from this all-absorbing topic. It produces in our brains the phenomenon of crystallization of which Stendhal speaks in connection with love. One's imagination is always being brought back to one point, like a captive balloon which a rope perpetually drags back to earth. We women, and especially we mothers, are tired out and enervated, in fact almost ill, from being in this state of mind. One becomes embittered, one feels one is growing wicked, because of this implacable force which condemns us to inaction and to waiting, which forces us to submit, and to stifle all useless rebellion within us. It is as painful as it possibly can be, and one is furious when one meets with people who are calm and uninterested."

"My dear, I understand your point of view and sympathize with you, but think of all the others who are in a like case, and remember that it has always been thus from the beginning of the world—towns crumble to pieces, ships are blown up, volcanoes belch forth flames, and millions of men kill one another. The East of France is distracted, and feels that evil

days are coming, whilst the life of those who are far removed from the struggles and catastrophes pursues the even tenor of its way, and the impression the war makes on them is on a par with that made by cinematograph pictures.

" You will not prevent this being the case for the great majority of mankind. But so illogical is human nature that, if we happen to be directly touched by misfortune, we think that it ought to strike the whole world. You see, my dear, how destiny, mildly implacable, carries out its work, which oscillates perpetually—Creation, destruction—Destruction, creation. Its answer to the Internationalists who were singing of universal peace and disarmament is frightfulness, fire, pillage, towns destroyed, and fields piled with corpses.

" Let us collect ourselves and think of those whom we love, and wait, since there is nothing else that we can do."

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December 31.—The wintry wind is blowing keenly and violently. The year is dying, and I am thinking of those out there in the trenches who are playing at " Qui perd gagne." How sorrowfully they must be thinking of their loved ones ! and I am thinking also of the unutterable sadness of everything around my son.

The pagans used to sprinkle lustral waters on

towns defiled by inexpiable wars, to appease the anger of the gods. Who can tell us what ritual we can perform to allay the anger of God and wipe out the traces of so much blood ?

What is my son doing on this last evening of the year, on this December 31st which soon will be torn from this year's calendar like the last leaf from a tree that thenceforward remains black and withered.

He, too, is thinking of the war that has played havoc with his plans, and of the Fate which has snatched him away from his betrothed; and he, too, feels the need of pulling himself together in this hour which separates one year from another.

The hours slip away, the days pass, the months fly, without one's even perceiving that they have disappeared. As the year rolls into the abyss, it makes a gloomy sound, a peculiar sound, a sound that one can hear. " The Old Father of Days," as Hesiod called him, Chronos with his scythe, Saturn, sad and always lean, despite the centuries that he has devoured, appears dimly at this corner of the road, and seems to count the flock which he is leading along paths of suffering to the fearful unknown.

Sitting with my feet on the fender, I indulged in these thoughts and listened to the monotonous tick of the clock that marks off the minutes which will never return. What does this New Year which rises before us, veiled like Isis and as enigmatic as the

Sphinx, hold concealed in its cloak? Of what are our great military chiefs and politicians thinking? What decisions will they come to about us? In what position will France be when the year which is not yet born shall have accomplished its twelve months' evolution? And whilst the dying year goes to rejoin its sisters in the Valley of the Old Moons, we must turn to the Almanack which is as yet intact, and full of hope, inasmuch as it is full of days.

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January.—We spent the first days of the year alone, and so avoided the trivialities of the season, with only the post as a link between us and our dear ones. The war news is colourless. Advances and retreats and counter-attacks, and that is all. When both sides take refuge in their trenches they may stay there for a long time.

There has been a fresh Zeppelin raid on London. English men and women will be able to grasp in a still more tangible way that Germany does not mean to carry on the war in kid gloves, or to be hindered by sentimental considerations of humanity. That will give fresh zeal to the troops who are fighting side by side with ours. Meantime there is no sign of movement among the neutrals. Italy is on the watch, America is keeping on terms with Germany, Roumania is waiting for Italy, Greece wants to remain unconcerned, while German torpedo-boats blow up English

and French vessels, and floating mines work incalculable damage.

We live in an atmosphere of catastrophes and madness, for to read the account of all the atrocities committed daily in the invaded towns is enough to drive one mad. When I see tales of the kind in the newspapers, I turn away my eyes as I should before some hideous monstrosity; then my great resource against the encroachments of this frightful nightmare is a book, a well-written book, which carries me into the midst of other lives—fictitious, it is true, but they might be real, and their ups and downs grip me and stir me and make me forget my own unhappiness. It may be an illusion, but I think that in the country books, like other things, have a particular fragrance, a faint and indefinable fragrance, which is perhaps but the sigh of all the souls that have been for so long shut up in libraries. The wit of some seems more cutting, the delicacy of others fresher. On those dreary days when one has no news, a book appeals to one more closely than at other times.

Ah! but there are other days too when one feels plunged in a gloom so profound that one wishes to escape from life, and to say with Byron in his last moments, "Now I must sleep."

VIII.—LES SABLONS. JAN.-FEB., 1915

January.—There has been a check at Soissons, due apparently to a flood on the Aisne, which broke a bridge and stopped our sending the necessary reinforcements to the first line. If streams and rivers take a hand in barring our road, what will become of us? When one thinks how near Soissons is to Paris, one cannot help trembling at the idea that the Germans may try another descent upon it. The Russians have been brought to a standstill by ice in the Carpathians; on that side too the advance is distinctly slow.

Paul writes to say his squadron is ready; he will be starting soon. The Taubes have flown over Paris, but without doing much damage. My nephew Pierre is due to start too. So I shall go to Paris in a few days to say good-bye to my son.

* * * * *

January.—Our friends from Val André have been to see us. They had got up a concert at the hospital at Melun, and I went to it with them, as I wished to watch the effect of music on the wounded.

We went into a vast ward, in which all the beds

were occupied. In the middle were rows of benches for the sound members of the audience. Among the wounded were several Turcos and sailors.

Just as the concert was going to begin, they carried in an Arab whose feet had been frost-bitten, and who had had to undergo an operation. I was immensely struck by the sight of this maimed man being carried in by his comrades. I felt as if I were in a Purgatory of physical suffering, and I ached all over.

The first chords on the piano drove away this feeling of discomfort, and from then onwards I was absorbed in the music and in studying the men's faces.

I can safely say that not one of those present remained unaffected. On my right was a man who had had an operation a few days before. I had noticed his face, which was cadaverous and terribly sad. When our friend P. played on his violin the first bars of his cradle song, " Dormez vite," the poor fellow's face lit up under the soothing influence of its rhythm and melody.

Everyone must have seen a gloomy corner in a copse suddenly lighted up and transfigured by the rays of the sun. This patient's face lit up in the same way. When M. P. sang the " Paimpolais," the sailors who were there took up the chorus. It was really fine, and one was glad to find that one was doing them so much good.

After the concert we went up and down among them, offering them sweets and cigarettes and marrons glacés, which were highly appreciated.

Our friend P. decided to give another concert, at Fontainebleau this time.

* * * * *

January.—The question of Japanese intervention is being discussed. One is very eager to see this horrible war brought to a close, but would it be any good calling in these haughty Japs ?

" What do you think about it ?" I said to the Master.

" My dear, since the Embassies are silent on this subject, I can only follow their lead. Perhaps there will be some other auspicious intervention which will hurry on events and bring the end nearer."

" Do not people say the support of the Japanese would be very expensive, and that it would take six months at least to transport the troops ?"

" Yes, people have tried to invent a whole heap of reasons, but none of them is worth anything."

" You spoke a little while ago of an auspicious intervention. Were you perhaps thinking of Italy ?"

" Italy is in a very difficult position just now, and I think she is wishing that her Boot were a seven-leagued boot, that she might put it on and get out of the scrape she is in. In fact she is pulled this way and that by conflicting influences. She remembers

that we took Tunis from her, and that she has a treaty with Germany; and then there is the Papacy, another factor which is not likely to bias her in our favour, for it must be admitted that the eldest daughter of the Church has behaved very badly towards her spiritual father; on the other hand she has an idea that we shall win in the end, so she is feeling her way very anxiously. You will see that at our first considerable success in the Dardanelles or at the front, she will begin to move. It would be amusing to say to Italy then: 'Oh! pray don't trouble. Do stay where you are.'"

"Well, I wish she would make up her mind and be done with it."

* * * * *

January.—A letter from Paul.

"At last I find time to write to you. Not that my thoughts have not been always with you and with Her; but you have no idea what our settling down involves. We had bad weather when we left Paris, bad weather on our way, and bad weather when we got there. My heart beat very fast as we passed over Asnières, as I thought that the dear little girl of my dreams was there and perhaps crying. But one must control oneself when one has the wheel in one's hand, so I made a bee-line for Amiens, sending my fondest thoughts to you and Muncho. Here everyone is

hail fellow well met—even the Flight Commanders. I had to see to my engine directly I arrived, and I have had a bomb-thrower and a machine-gun mounted on my plane. As soon as my bird was ready I went up a thousand feet, and took some sighting shots with my machine-gun at a buoy. The gun makes an infernal noise—four hundred shots a minute! just think of it—and for the time being I can't hear the engine. But my gunner is very hot stuff, and the buoy was riddled like a sieve. I made my report to the Captain, and now I am only waiting for orders to cross the enemy's lines.

"Have you any news of Muncho? Try and get her to come and stay with you for a bit. You will feel less lonely, and so will she. Then you can talk about me. Well, don't worry; all is well. I never was fitter in my life, and if it were not that I am away from you and Muncho, I should be very happy.

"With much love,

"PAUL."

I shall be a little less anxious now, at least for a few days.

* * * * *

January.—Our aeroplanes are apparently being very useful, throwing bombs and steel darts which are very deadly. The paper has an account of the result produced by these darts on Prussian Hussars. Some

of them were pierced right through, the dart going through the horse also. One wretched man was killed so instantaneously that his hand remained clutching the bridle, and his body was thus dragged along the road by his horse.

From what our airmen report, whole districts in the North of Belgium are under water. The Scheldt and the Lys are both overflowing their banks. With all these disasters around them, one wonders what is happening to the wretched Belgians who have stayed there.

Everyday one hears of fresh trials and sufferings, and of the martyrdom which is being inflicted on those unhappy people who have neither country nor homes left. They have nothing save a cruel and arrogant enemy, for Germany, throughout its organized existence, has always been the torturer of other nations. How delighted we shall be to see the collapse of this ephemeral and monstrous edifice, built upon the ruins of right and justice which they have everywhere violated. Europe will ring with cheers at the fall of this colossal clockwork Empire.

I can't remember where I read—in the "Lettres Alsaciennes," I think—a passage about the Germans worded thus: "And you Germans, woe to your towns, woe to your villages, woe to your infants in their mother's wombs, if ever a victorious enemy sets foot on the soil of your fatherland! Watch on the Rhine,

yes, watch ! you who are answerable and will have to pay for the crimes you are committing. Watch on the banks of the Vistula and the Elbe. Forge for yourselves new weapons of death, practise yourselves the art of killing and exterminating your fellowmen, but watch night and day, do not slumber nor sleep. At the slightest defeat, all will be over with you and with Germany."

Wouldn't one think that that had been written a week before the war ? The author, M. Alexander Weill, a Jew, wrote this in 1871, I think. I found the book in Drumont's library with this note: " This book sheds an incidental light on these people sitting in darkness, and bears with it, despite its curses, the light of revelation."

* * * * *

January.—People were right who said when flying first started that these young men loved taking risks, and that in the struggle for the conquest of the air they were using all the reserve of energy which in days gone by was expended on wars, on exploring expeditions, on fights for the triumph of religion or independence.

My son often said to me: " I really never feel that I have the full grasp of all my faculties except when I am steering my aeroplane. Then I use unknown powers which were latent in me and which the difficulties of the struggle in the air bring out. My brain

seems to me to be bigger, my heart and lungs expand, my arms are of Herculean strength, my ears, attuned to the roaring of the engine, become so keen that they take note of the smallest weakness or the slightest irregularity in the formidable machine I drive. My whole being is thus divided in two, and I seem to be one with my machine and to feel its faintest vibrations."

And I understood that this was what a man must feel to be a good pilot. And now the war has taken him from me, and he too will go out to observe the enemy's positions and to drop bombs on the Germans.

Ah ! why do we have children ? So that they should be torn from us by war, or should go off of their own accord and build their nests elsewhere. It is cruel, but it is the way in life; our children only belong to us as long as they have need of us. One must not conceal from oneself that a mother's love is in no way reciprocal—it is merely a gift. There is nothing left for us but the value of our sacrifice.

What bitter thoughts, what regrets, what desolation !

I shall always remember them as I saw them the evening before he went. *She*, his fair-haired fiancée, sad but self-controlled, like a true Frenchwoman; her magnificent brown eyes were swimming with tears, but she veiled them each time that his glance sought hers. In his big hand he was holding the tiny one, which represented the happiness he hoped for on his return, and offered him a heart as fresh and

blooming as a bunch of white roses. How much they said to each other, as they sat thus in silence in the sweet communion of heart and soul!

The memory of these sad but exquisite moments will swell through their hearts like a symphony without words, and will help them somewhat to endure the separation.

I said to my son:

"At least go and say good-bye to our friends before you go."

But he answered:

"No, Mother; in the first place, although there are very few friends to go and see, I have very little time. And then, you know how some of them have behaved to us; the nasty, spiteful things they said, the unfavourable opinion which they formed of me, their sarcasm and the way they jeered at my competence as a pilot, of which they knew absolutely nothing; and later on, when I wished to give up flying and take to house-decoration, Mme. X.'s sneering remark to one of her friends, "That idiot Paul is going to take up painting now," etc. It is not a thing that matters much, it is true, but my skin was not so tough then as it is now, and it hurt, and I shan't forget it. In the eyes of those friends it is a crime not to be either an actor, a buffoon, or an artist. You see, Mother dear, one comes to places in life where one should know how to throw out ballast."

I listened to him for a long time without interrupting him as he aired his resentment. I felt that he was enjoying being able to talk without restraint, and did not try to argue with him, for as a matter of fact he was quite right both in what he said and thought.

Now that he has gone it will be like living in a desert. When I woke up the morning after he had left, my heart was full of indescribable bitterness, and I was terribly depressed. Ginette, my sister-in-law, came into my room and found me sitting on the edge of my bed with my hands clasped and my gaze wandering. When she saw me, shivering all over in my misery, my eyes red with weeping, my face drawn, she put her arms round me and we cried together.

My sorrow will soon be hers.

* * * * *

January.—Time brings no change or mitigation in this accursed war. It goes on implacable, fierce, and savage, with nothing of the greatness or the Homeric glory of the First Empire, with no striking features but the crimes and treacheries, the murderous inventions and foul tricks, by means of which those brutal Germans surprise and assassinate our soldiers in their trenches.

"A bow must not alway be bent," said St. John. The one-armed Kaiser's bow has certainly been bent too much. It will snap.

"Ah! on what firm foundations France was stand-

ing after all," Drumont said the other day. "When one thinks of all those silent, humble, lowly folk who are defending their country and dying for its sake, one understands the greatness of our race. Our politicians, it is true, even in the face of the most terrible scourge, have not laid aside their prejudices or their quarrels. If there was a deluge and the end of the world came, it would be just the same; they would quarrel as to what the arch to commemorate the Alliance should be called whilst people were drowning round them. After all, perhaps they can't help being like that."

"Events have made their position a pretty thorny one."

"Not as thorny as that of a poor shoemaker who belonged to a battalion of 'Fédérés' under the Commune. I've probably told you the story."

"No, not a word of it."

"Well, this poor shoemaker had never received anything from the many Governments which succeeded each other in France but a pair of trousers. He was modestly disporting himself in them in the neighbourhood of the École Militaire, when the 'Versaillais' arrived.

"It was easy to throw down his gun, and he did so quickly. But his trousers! and it was not the moment to appear as a *sans-culotte*.

"Trembling all over he went and undressed in a

friend's cellar, and tried to get home. But he soon discovered how foolish this idea was.

"'Where are you going?' asked the Versaillais.

"'Home.'

"'Where is your home?'

"'Here.'

"'We should like to have a look. You go first.'

"Alas! the unhappy man discovered that he had forgotten his key—it was in his trousers-pocket."

"He was in a very awkward position."

"Quite so. He could not tell them where his key was without telling them where his trousers were, and what sort of trousers they were.

"Fortunately an officer intervened, and he got off with nothing but a bad fright.

"The officer remembering that the shoemaker had served him very well in the past, arranged things for him.

"All that is very ancient history. Is there any news about the Dardanelles to-day?"

"Yes, the Allied Fleets are in the Straits, the papers say."

"That may be the piece of orange-peel on which the Kaiser will slip."

* * * * *

January.—There has been an earthquake in Italy. There seem to be nothing but catastrophes everywhere. The papers are full of stories of German atrocities.

The naked bodies of some women were found stripped and empaled on German bayonets near a farm, their breasts had been cut in pieces, and other unspeakable details revealed the Sadism which prevails among the Kaiser's soldiers. Is his madness infectious? and has it spread to his Army?—or are these massacres due to the brutes being drunk? A Red Cross nurse who had looked after a wounded prisoner, an officer, was warmly thanked by him several times. His thanks were charmingly expressed in excellent French. He even went so far as to promise to send her a little souvenir when he went back to his country. Soon afterwards, when he had recovered, he did go back, and the nurse thought no more about it, until one day she received a parcel from the German officer.

Rather surprised at so much politeness she eagerly undid the parcel, and nearly fainted with horror on discovering, wrapped up in tissue-papers, two baby's hands cut off at the wrist. Such monstrous behaviour seems inconceivable on the part of a man of a certain class, and therefore better educated than the mass of common soldiers. A story like this sets one thinking of the mother who must have been present when her child was mutilated. . . .

Who will ever know all the sufferings endured by Frenchwomen in these hours of terror and death brought upon them by the German war? They, too, have trodden the road to Calvary.

Surely this Kaiser must be the Anti-Christ, for he has destroyed the foundations of the old world and overthrown the pillars of modern society, and all the laws of humanity and of Christian morality. Surely the hand of God will weigh heavy upon him!

* * * * *

January.—The month has been brought to a close with the departure of my nephew Pierre. His mother was told that he was going to take the squadron's horses to the front, and then come back. In this way she bore his going fairly well. Like all young people, he went off in high spirits and full of pluck. Eighteen years old! What a fair bouquet, redolent with youth and courage, is here being offered to France! Poor dear little Pierre, brought up in all the softness and laziness of a hot country, surrounded by all the luxuries and comforts which are necessary in such climates—what will become of him in the cold, the rain, and the snow in the trenches? And my child, where is he?

* * * * *

January.—We had hoped that some decisive action would take place this month, and here we are at the end of it. When I say "we" I mean really that the civilians were hoping for some decisive action, for the great military chiefs know what they are about, and do not commit themselves to false views of the situation. If only they won't let things drag on into next year!

Two big ships have been sunk in the Dardanelles by floating mines, which has considerably cooled our ardour. Now they are sweeping up the mines in the straits; it seems to me that they should have begun by doing that. They say that the Allies will be in Constantinople by Easter; at this rate it will more likely be by Trinity Sunday.

Japanese intervention is once more to the fore in diplomatic circles. Chéradame puts forward a rather attractive scheme for enabling the Japanese to co-operate with the Allies, but it would necessitate the assistance of Roumania and the other Balkan States. He suggests that 400,000 Japanese might be brought through Trans-Siberia, which would take about two months.

Another Japanese contingent could come round by sea through the Suez Canal in about forty days, land at Salonika, cross the Carpathians and Hungary, and so join the Trans-Siberian Army, so as to attack Germany from the south. England says nothing to all these plans, and the United States dread above all things the increase of the economic influence of Japan, which would result from her intervention against Germany.

Drumont regards it as merely one of the many plans which spring up and die down in the course of the war.

* * * * *

February.—The first of the month, and Paul's birthday. He has written me a long letter.

"My darling Mother,

"Letters take an endless time to cover the distance which separates us. The last one which I have just this minute received, on the 13th, is dated the 8th. I hope this slowness is merely temporary. For the last week there has been a fog, and I have spent my time putting up a tent in the shed for the mechanics and myself. I made the carpenters put down a floor to keep off the damp, and I've hung up my hammock and shall sleep very comfortably in it. My two men will be near me, in beds which they have fixed up for themselves on the floor. The furniture consists of a table, and shelves on which I keep my papers and my maps; the walls are even papered! with maps of the front. A ship's lamp hangs from the ceiling.

"My toilet accessories consist of an indiarubber basin, a bath of the same material, and a metal tumbler which folds up, or rather shuts up in several sections. Yesterday the Major sent for us, and made us mark on our maps the next points which we shall have to bombard.

"I have now been on my fourth bombing expedition, and I assure you, dear Mother, that each time I go through the same emotions and have the same

physical and moral sensations. In the last time I was at the height of 7,500 feet, and above the sea of clouds, through which the Boches shelled me vigorously; when I came out into a clear bit they aimed ahead of me.

"I have been sent up for promotion as Quartermaster, and am going to start flying by night. I have received news of Muncho. She is very sad over the fate of her parents, and at this moment has only you and me to rely upon. There are moments, I must confess, when I lose patience at not being able to foresee the end of this terrible war, and in thinking of you and my fiancée. But this mood does not last, which is just as well, for it does more harm than the shrapnel.

"How is the Master? Does he remember our talks about the war of the future? He always refused to believe it was possible—what does he think of it now?

"Write to me quickly, with lots of details about you all and the three doggies. And as I finish I may tell you that all goes well—very well even.

"A thousand kisses from your son,

"PAUL."

* * * * *

February.—In spite of the fact that we are still quite at the beginning of the month, there are days when one feels spring in the air. One sometimes

inhales a long soft breath like a sigh. It is winter dying, and the trees in the hedgerows, the grass on the rocks, and the ivy on the ruins rustle, and a ripple passes through their foliage.

In my walks I often come across a very old church. I go in. Two big stone pillars, short and squat, support its wooden arch, from which hang votive offerings. The lamp in the choir burns in a tumbler of yellow oil, and the badly-joined panes of glass allow many rays of light to pass through. Sometimes there is a woman there arranging the chairs, and putting candles in the branched iron candlesticks which are fixed on to the pillars. But more often I am alone, and there comes to me a delightful moment in which my desolate soul can gain new strength in solitude and prayer.

Sometimes the flight of a bird recalls me from my deep reverie and I find that swallows have come in through the broken panes. They come and perch on the basin of Holy Water, dip their beaks in it and, after splashing once or twice, go off as they came.

Like them I go to refresh my soul, to lay bare my heart at the inexhaustible fount of the greatest of all blessings—peace.

When I come out of the old church I feel calm and am more endued with courage to endure our present life. Religion is full of sensations which are almost profane. There is ecstasy in self-mortification, and

a feeling of intoxication in prayer; hours of service bring a sense of elation, and make one's heart throb. Sorrowful souls cast themselves down at the Virgin's feet, and gather spiritual warmth at that Altar where the fire is never quenched.

* * * * *

February.—The buds are beginning to appear at the points of the branches, and we hope soon to welcome the arrival of spring—not for our own sake, but for those who are fighting. The lack of foresight and the carelessness of the Government were being spoken of the other day in Drumont's presence. Is it really true that at the beginning of the war there were 300,000 Germans in France, and that at the present moment there are still nearly a hundred thousand?

Acts of expulsion have been passed against them, but at the same time circulars have been printed and distributed to the heads of the different departments of the police.

All this is tittle-tattle, it will be said. No, the head of a department, in a fine fit of indignation, laid the confidential circular before Drumont.

One of our many readers sent us a letter about an article in *Ruy Blas* and even the article itself.

" During the month of August, 1914, we mentioned the rather hurried departure for England of a rich Jewess, who besides being well known in society, is also a sculptor, and whose house in Paris was a favourite

resort. Was she afraid that the care she had taken to surround herself with men prominent in politics and letters would be regarded with suspicion? Did she think she would be safer on the other side of the Channel? In any case, she established herself in London without any hope of being able to come back before the termination of hostilities.

"No efforts were made to induce her to stay; there are many well-known people, 'bien parisiennes,' who one would be glad to know were not in France during the mobilization. In the same way naturalized subjects, whoever they are, should not be at the front nor in positions of responsibility, neither should any person who was German and whose relatives are German be tolerated in France at the present moment.

"And this is just a case in point, for although this lady, who so wisely withdrew, said she was an American, she was the daughter of a German, her sister was German, and all her relations were German. In fact, she herself made so little secret of it that a little while before the war, wishing to be decorated with the Legion of Honour (this was simply the caprice of a pretty woman, and only justified by a feminine whim), she pointed out that she was the niece of the celebrated German painter Mentzel, and the pupil of Lenbach of Berlin, the Emperor's painter.

"Now we have suddenly learnt that, with the help of very influential people, she has returned to Paris

and re-opened her house, and though we are quite ready to congratulate her, we cannot congratulate the influential people who assisted her."

That is food for thought, isn't it ?

I will give no more examples of this sort for the moment. Comment is superfluous.

* * * * *

February.—I received a letter this morning from my son's fiancée. The poor child is much worried at not hearing from her parents, and tells me of her distress.

" Dear Mother of Paul,

" Not knowing anything of what is happening to my father and mother makes me terribly anxious, and it is wonderfully pleasant to me to feel that you sympathize with my very natural distress. You tell me to go and see the member for the Nord, who is at this moment in Paris on political business, and that perhaps he will be able to give me information on this subject. Oh ! if that were so, and if I owed the joy of being at last reassured to your suggestion, I should love you more than ever, if that were possible. My uncle, my father's brother, to whom I was entrusted, is also going to serve. Oh ! how unhappy and lonely I feel !

" My aunt is in despair. My uncle, never having been a soldier, will not be able to stand either the

wear and tear of the war or the hard life of the trenches.

"He is quite willing to do his military duty, but he wonders how he is going to manage it. His hesitation and pusillanimity make me appreciate more than ever the superb energy of our Paul.

"How I long for his dear letters, which I love so much and which make my heart beat as though I heard his voice. Oh! dear Mother of Paul, write to me very often, and believe in my deep affection.

"Your daughter, if you will allow it,

"MUNCHO."

The dear child leans on our affection for support in her distress, and how we love her! She said to me recently, "You don't know how I miss being able to say 'Mother.' I should like to call you Mother, but I can't—first of all because one must not anticipate the future, and secondly because I should feel as if I were detracting something from the rights of my own dear Mother. I must wait. There is nothing for it but waiting."

Alas! one of the great secrets of life is to be able to wait. The dear child is full of tenderness and feeling; she is witty without being spiteful, well-educated without being pedantic, and reserved without being prudish.

A woman with such a character loves once only and then for ever.

* * * * *

February.—From time to time the Taubes come over, drop a few bombs, and go off again. Then the Zeppelins get heavily under way for Paris, and our aeroplanes pursue them. This week the communiqués have been better. The fighting in the Dardanelles has begun again. There is a panic in Constantinople, and the inhabitants are fleeing towards Asia.

In another theatre of war the Russians are said to be advancing in the Carpathians.

In talking over this news with Drumont as he was taking his turn round the garden, I said to him:

"If only Italy makes up her mind, the Kaiser won't know where to turn. . . . They say he is a little mad already."

And Drumont answered gravely:

"'Nihil est magnum sine mixtura dementiae' ('Nothing is great without a streak of madness')."

How true!

* * * * *

February.—Pierre has written his mother several letters full of high spirits and refreshing optimism. Ginette was kind enough to pass on to me one of them, telling of the departure of one of their officers:

"My dear Parents,

"We were inspected for the second time to-day by the General of Division. The first inspection took place in the trenches. This one was on horseback

in the pouring rain. One man out of each platoon was to show the General and his staff his regimental kit. The lieutenant in my squadron had chosen me, so as neat as a new pin and mounted on a splendid horse I left the line, and explained to the General the arrangement of my kit. It's no laughing matter. I had spent two hours putting it in order, and an hour rolling my overcoat. How far removed theory is from practice! The General and the officers of the squadron appeared to be satisfied. He asked me many questions about bayonet drill, in fact about everything that interested him. All this time the rain was running down my back and my magnificent overcoat was rolled up behind my saddle. After the inspection the regiment manœuvred before the General at full gallop. It was ripping! The General made a speech congratulating us on our fine deportment; the platoon commander called us together, and with tears in his eyes said good-bye to us, as he was going off at two hours' notice on special service. This officer, after saying a few words full of feeling to us, shook hands with each of us, and we all had a lump in our throats and had difficulty in saying 'good-bye, Sir,' to him. A dozen or so who had fought by his side were sobbing as he was, and I did the same.

"That is just to show you what sort of a man he was. He would rather have stayed with us than

be made a captain, and the platoon would have followed him anywhere. On service he slept on straw like us; he was extraordinarily simple, and refused everything but the barest necessities. He was also very just and very capable. These good-byes lasted about ten minutes; then without a pause, while the impression was still fresh, he went off at full gallop with his orderly. We are all still feeling very sad over his departure."

These young men's admiration and respect for their superior officer is touching and cheering. But indeed, the officers are behaving splendidly in this war —everyone says so. Pierre, in another letter, tells us of the battlefields of the Marne over which he has been.

"It was on a front of thirty-eight miles," he says, "from Vitry to Blacy, passing through Frémicourt. It is a terrible sight. All along the road there are nothing but graves, which we salute in passing. We did it more than a hundred times, it was very sad and moving. On the graves the caps and arms of the dead, and their gun's cartridge-cases, etc., have been thrown pell-mell. The French graves are very well looked after by the inhabitants, who come and cover them with flowers. One sees on these tombs mostly the képis of the 8th Chasseurs, the 25th Colonial Regiment, and the 105th Line Regiment.

Poor fellows! The Boches' graves are just bare earth covered with dead branches. There are no names on them, whereas ours are headed by a board with rank, name, and identity disc on it, or the sad word 'Unknown.'

"Many mourning cards have been put at the foot of our graves. The trees are riddled like sieves, and have enormous holes in them made by shells, or the shell itself embedded in their trunks. In one of the fields we crossed our horses stumbled for miles on pieces of iron or shells. We went through villages and small towns which were completely ruined, amongst others the village of Frémicourt, where there are scarcely any houses left. The inhabitants have returned to many of these devastated places, and give us information about the fighting. It is very sad to see the late owners who have come back looking at the ruins of their farms, their houses, their barns, and their agricultural machines, all burnt, bent, destroyed, and pillaged. They have nothing left but pieces of broken crockery, tottering chimneys, and furniture split and blackened by fire. Some of them sit on the ruins and weep with their heads in their hands. Others stand there fierce and lowering with clenched fists, muttering vague words of vengeance. In all the villages the churches and churchyards have been plundered, and most of the churches are roofless and open to the sky. God will the more easily be able to

see what has been done in them, and will punish these Vandals. My dear parents, this is what we have been seeing during three days' march.

"We came across huge holes where we could have buried two or three horses. These have been made by the big guns. Here and there one sees shell holes in iron doors and the fronts of houses; the few houses that are still standing have all got loop-holes made in them, especially those in the neighbourhood of bridges. We saw the house which had been the Headquarters of the German Staff, and it was surrounded by trenches for three or four miles. Huge trees, which had been cut in half, protected the approaches to the house. We often found German caps hanging on the trees, and even clothes and empty helmets. I tell you these things just as they occur to me, and I shall remember this march across the battlefields all my life."

I have no comments to make on this vision of horror.

IX.—LES SABLONS. MARCH-MAY

March.—Quite near Les Sablons there is a delightful little village called By. An American artist, a Miss K., lives there. She was a pupil of Rosa Bonheur. Since the beginning of the war, Miss K. has put up convalescent wounded from the hospital at Fontainebleau in her studio.

She started this hospital with her private means and the help of the people in the neighbourhood, but she has naturally had to cope with great difficulties. The hospitals are overflowing with wounded, and in spite of the fact that they send large numbers to auxiliary hospitals, and that private houses also offer their generous and efficacious hospitality, there are, alas! so many of them that they are crowded up anyhow. Well, every time that private persons offer their means and their services for the wounded, they find themselves running their heads against compilers of useless documents, against ill-will, against hide-bound pedants, sticklers for red-tape, against all the maim, halt, and blind, who gather round that Pool of Siloam which we call our Government offices.

And it goes on for weeks and months, while in the meantime the wounded continue to flow into the hospitals and the convalescents to come out and crowd up the depots.

When all the medical, surgical, and political palavers are over, then a certain number of wounded are removed from the hospitals and distributed in the auxiliary hospitals, who in their turn divide them up among the houses in the neighbourhood.

I went, therefore, to see Miss K. the other day, and to take some cigarettes and a little money to her Tommies. I went into the ward with her. In the big ward of the auxiliary hospital there were beds, a stove, and a phonograph on a table. All the convalescent wounded were there. When we went in those who were standing saluted us, and after they had been introduced we sat down and talked.

"Come along and tell these ladies where you were wounded."

"You, Sergeant Galez."

"Or you, Telier."

They all made excuses, not daring to put themselves forward. Only Telier, who is from the South, could be brought to tell the story of the truss of straw.

"Well, it was like this—it was in the woods of the Argonne. One night there were four of us at an observation post watching some trusses of straw which had been placed in front of the Boche trenches,

and behind which we thought there were Germans. The corporal said to us, at a moment when the moon was lighting up the wood: 'I assure you there is at least one sentinel behind those trusses of straw: someone must go and see.'

"'There are certainly trusses of straw, Corporal, but as for anything else——'

"'I know what I'm talking about, hang it! I'm not a pudding-head.'

"'Oh! well, then——'

"'Then you don't see anything, Fatty, behind the straw?'

"'Nothing!'

"'Well, I see a sort of shadow on the ground. Which of you is going to crawl over there and bayonet the sentinel?'

"No answer.

"'Well, you go Durand, and take Telier and Bernard, and come back and tell me what you have seen.'

"It was not a very pleasant order to obey. In the woods, on a bright night, surrounded by enemy trenches and traps laid by the Boches. All the same we had to obey, and smartly too, so we started.

Half-way my comrades said to me:

"'We'll go back—what?'

"'Oh no, we can't do that; besides, what shall we say when we do get back?'

" ' We'll say there's nothing there.'

" ' And supposing there is something ?'

" ' Oh well, go if you like, if you're going to be so cussed about it. We'll wait for you here.'

" For a moment, for one second, I hesitated. My comrades had quite made up their minds to let me go alone, but damn it ! it was duty ! Off I went. I crawled along, scarcely touching the earth. The moon was shining full on to the trusses of straw and the clearing they stood in. It was quite likely that I would be seen, but something seemed to be impelling me forward, and on I went. Soon I was able to touch the straw, and I felt a body through this frail barrier standing erect behind it. Getting up with infinite precaution I sprang upon what I took to be a sentinel. Horrors ! The enemy had Boche corpses propped up in a standing position behind each bastion of straw, calculating that we should mistake them for living sentinels, and that at any rate at night they would keep us off.

" I was filled with insuperable disgust. I took the guns which they had placed beside the bodies in order to make the illusion complete from a distance, and went back to my two comrades, who had left me so completely in the lurch.

" As we went back towards the trenches, the one to whom the order had been given said to me:

" ' Then you will tell the officer what you saw ?'

" ' Certainly not—you must.'

" We got back to the trench and saw the officer coming along; he looked anxious.

" ' Well, what is happening over there ?' he said to my comrade.

" There was silence; then, after hesitating for a minute, the soldier turned towards me and said:

" ' There, sir, is the man who took my place and went instead of me.'

" A little while afterwards I was made a sergeant."

Telier is a Tommy who knows how to take care of himself. He makes rings, hat-pins, and pen-holders out of German bullets. When he had finished his story he took a cork and a piece of string, and imitated the different noises made by big guns, machine-guns, and rifles. It gave us great pleasure to converse with these men who are so simple, and each one of whom is a hero. They are never tired of praising their officers. What appeals to them most is, the officers treating them as comrades, sharing in their discomforts and cheering them when their courage flags. So it comes about that times of public calamity nearly always bring to light latent qualities, and people show a devotion we should never have suspected them to be capable of, and a bravery in which we no longer believed.

* * * * *

March.—We are fortunate in our neighbours at Les Sablons. They are very pleasant, and we are on very good terms with them. In the evening, if I am feeling very sad I go and spend an hour with them, and sometimes Mme. R. comes here. She has no children, but some nephews whom she has practically brought up are at the front. So we talk of the war, and the fine young men whom that octopus has taken away from us. We discuss the communiqués of the day, and then we part. It's not much, but enough to prevent one feeling completely isolated. I have plenty of work to do in the daytime. I write at Drumont's dictation and answer the numerous letters that come from readers of his paper—in this way I am less obsessed by the war. But in the evening dark thoughts and anxieties come into my mind again. When the Angelus rings the Master is generally sitting in the garden, resting and watching the light dying, that light so little of which penetrates to his eyes veiled by cataract.

It is a melancholy hour, and one cannot but be influenced by it when one is suffering all that we are suffering.

* * * * *

April.—My pretty little Muncho, my brother, and my sister came for Easter, and stayed with us for a week. The Master was pleased to see our future daughter-in-law again. In Paris when she was

introduced to him, he said to Paul: "My friend, I congratulate you, and in spite of my age I envy you." It was a pretty compliment. Such trifles as this make up the happiness of family life, and they were a welcome break in the monotony of the dreary days we are living through, when even the smallest things seem black.

We went for a great many walks, and for drives in the car and in the carriage through the forest. Driving is really the more agreeable, for one enjoys the forest and all its attractions without getting tired. We trampled the rich soil of the woods which smells of strawberries, we heard a far-away cuckoo, and sometimes the odour of mushrooms introduced a materialistic note in this spiritual concert. Soothed by the horse's trot and feeling very peaceful, Muncho and I used to give free rein to our fancies; hunting, deer, sounds, colours, everything provided food for chatter. We enjoyed all the pleasures of imagination; and "He" came into our conversations every other minute.

I told Muncho how one evening, when my son was quite tiny, I was standing on the balcony holding him in my arms, when he said to me suddenly:

"Mummie, I shall go up among the stars one day."

And when I held him tighter, and said:

"You would leave your Mummie then?"

"Oh no! I shall go up among the stars, but I shall always come down to earth again."

He was only four years old.

On Easter Monday we thought we should like to see the Castle of Fontainebleau.

The keepers led us through huge empty rooms, from which all the works of art had been removed because of the war, and whose only ornaments were huge fire-hoses lying on the floor, all ready in case Boche bombs fell on the palace.

The vast empty rooms, stripped of their masterpieces, looked very dreary. The effect was deadening, and we were very glad to come out into the courtyard of the Cheval Blanc.

We felt that we needed something to think of and speak of and look at which would drive away the horrid sight. We wished to be diverted, using the word in its seventeenth-century sense of changing one's thoughts. So we went to see the carp. On the way we met d'Esparbès, the curator of the Museum. We made a few remarks about the war, and as we were standing beside the lake he told us an episode which happened on the last visit of the Empress Eugénie to Fontainebleau. Some little girls, daughters of men employed in the Castle, were grouped in the Cour de l'Étang to present her with flowers as she passed through it. The fathers and mothers stood behind them, and as the Empress passed she said a

few words to each of them. One strikingly pretty fair-haired little girl particularly attracted her attention, and she stroked her hair and kissed her. After the Empress had kissed her the father of this little girl, who was known to be a rabid socialist, bent down and said to her in a voice full of feeling: "You should say, 'Thank you, your Majesty.'"

"That was as it should be, wasn't it?" said d'Esparbès, laughing.

As they passed the lake the Empress said to d'Esparbès: "They have done away with my gondola. I should have liked to see it once more;" and she hurried on and did not speak again.

The weather as we came home was dull and rainy.

* * * * *

April.—On the surface life seems to flow on in the ordinary way. Really it is troubled by sorrow, anxiety, and a curious sense of waiting which prevents thought and makes all work difficult.

I can fix my attention only on the stupidest occupations, on details of our material life, of which I have always had a horror, but to which, now that I am almost my own servant, I am obliged to resign myself. Oh well, it does not bore me so very much, and manual work is very soothing when one's whole existence has been upset.

Drumont has not changed his manner of life at all; he does not even notice that there are fewer servants;

he lives in his ivory tower. He gets up late, reads the papers till midday, lunches heartily, and goes, after lunch, to the little wood. There he spends an hour or two sitting on a seat in the shade thinking out his article; he enjoys the silence and peace.

At four o'clock he has a glass of old wine and a biscuit, and is helped to another part of the garden, where he stays until dinner. Very often it is then that he dictates his article to me; it just depends on how he feels!

Dinner-time comes. When it is fine we dine out of doors; if it is wet we go in. And so on every day.

* * * * *

April.—When the Allied Fleets first entered the Straits we thought they would be at Constantinople in no time. It has been a terrible disappointment to see them progressing so slowly and suffering such losses. So to-day, when the papers announced that the guns of the Russian Fleet could be heard in the Bosphorus, we simply shrugged our shoulders.

However, it will come someday. Constantinople will be taken by the Allies. So will be avenged the Frenchmen, the knights and the crusaders of all nationalities, who fought and died of hunger or howled with thirst under those walls now doomed to destruction. The young men, the pachas, and the odalisques, who have breathed in the freshness of the Oriental

nights, have heard the Bulbul sing, and have recited verses of Saadi, will see all this splendid scenery collapse in fire, pillage, and blood. It's a pity!

* * * * *

May.—And now the spring has really come. Everything is growing and shooting up out of the earth, and everything smells of strawberries; the wisteria hangs down its mauve-coloured bunches, the syringa is flowering beautifully, and the roses are in bloom; over all hangs the lovely atmosphere of May, that gentle moisture which is as welcome to the air, the earth, and the sky, as water to thirsty lips.

It is heavenly in the woods and heavenly to walk on the grass. The lawns have been mown, and an intoxicating smell of hay comes from all the greenstuff drying in the sun. The earth is young and gay and spruce, and she is kindly and offers her charms to all.

The hawthorn is out along the hedges, and it set me thinking the other day that out there, where the earth has opened to shelter our soldiers, the poor hawthorn which should be white must have become red.

Walking through the fields, I saw boys between twelve and fifteen years old, and girls and women working, but no men at all; it was heartrending.

The villages are melancholy, and are entirely shut up after dusk. The women no longer stand before

their doors gossiping; they barely greet one another; each of them keeps her trouble to herself, for there is not a family left that has not been broken up. What a heavy burden they are bearing!

Nevertheless, it is a beauteous spring, and unusually mild for May, and the April moon seeing the destruction men are working amongst themselves has refrained from destroying anything.

The broom is spreading its golden glory in the forests, and sheds its brightness right up to the slopes of the railway. But alas! between the hedges on the flowery slopes, convoys of wounded go by, and other trains carrying thousands of strong, eager young men, prepared to go to the limits of human endurance for their country, the land, and the race.

Many of them go straight ahead, showing no sign, asking no question. They just go!

It is always like this; the life of to-day follows on the death of yesterday, and the deafening monotonous roar of the trains continues.

* * * * *

May.—At last Italy has made up her mind and entered the field, and upon my word she has begun well!

They say that we have sent an Army Corps and General Pau to help them. The poet d'Annunzio sowed the good seed of his sonorous phrases among the Italian multitudes, and the good seed has sprung

up: the Government understood the wisdom of giving way to popular feeling, and the King signed the mobilization order.

Will this hasten the end of the war?

Some say "yes," others "no." Anyway, the Italians are being successful both on land and sea.

The Russians seem to have recovered themselves, and the Allied Fleets are getting up the Dardanelles, bombarding as they go.

* * * * *

May.—That marvellous Transatlantic liner, the *Lusitania,* has been torpedoed by a German submarine on its way from New York; nearly all the passengers have been lost. This event, even if it does not bring America into the war, will surely at least stop her from supplying Germany with food, as she has been doing up till now.

An American woman wrote to Drumont the other day:

"I hope that now America will cease to feed *them.*"

A touching admission which made the Master smile.

"Certainly," he said, "if America cuts off supplies from Germany it will be a good thing—but perhaps something still better will happen. President Wilson may feel obliged to give in to the pressure of public opinion."

" Don't you think that Germany, realizing that she is already lost, would not be very much disturbed at seeing a fresh foe join in?—she would have a fine excuse to offer for her defeat later on: ' There were too many of them,' she will say.

" Yes, it's possible. People are saying so. In any case Wilson has lacked initiative; he had no idea of taking up a fine attitude, and the way in which he has behaved in this case seems to be summed up in ' sint ut sunt aut non sint ' (' Let things be as they are or let them not be '). Wilson has treated the challenge thrown down by Germany as though it were a business proposition, and is feeling his ground in order to keep on good terms with the aggressor."

All this will make the diplomatic parleys much longer. But what will be the outcome?

If there is war, if Wilson is obliged to declare it, he will be the one to burst the bubble of that bloodthirsty lunatic William II., and shatter the Don Quixote who mistook France for a windmill.

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May.—The war becomes more disappointing as summer comes on. Yesterday the Russians were said to be doing so well, and now they have let the Germans retake Przysml, which is most deplorable just when another country has come into the war. At the same time the English in the neighbourhood

of Arras have given way, and lost the positions which had been taken with such great efforts and losses in the last few days.

The more enemies Germany has, the more fresh troops she seems to produce. At this moment, in spite of Italy, they are massing troops in Flanders and on our front. A German engineer has invented a sort of brick for protecting the trenches which will make them more impregnable than concrete.

Each time one hears this sort of news, which seems to point to the war being very long, one feels overwhelmed by sorrow and bitterness. What strength of mind one needs to stand against it !

During these days when I was alternately depressed and in a state of revolt, I received a telegram from Paul telling me that he is being sent by G.H.Q. (General Headquarters) to take the B machines in hand and practise on them, in order to form a squadron later. He and four others have been chosen for this and for training the pilots, and he is hoping a great deal from having been given this position of trust.

He is therefore at Bourges for a month, and very happy, as he is with the best airmen in France, with the exception of poor Garros, who was taken prisoner by the Boches. He sent me some newspaper cuttings

which record the loss of numerous English vessels sunk by submarines.

We have also had an Atlantic liner sunk in the roads. In short, the Genie of war is loose, and is devouring everything; he rules the elements. It is horrible, and yet somehow magnificent.

X.—LES SABLONS. JUNE-AUGUST

June.—The month of sun and roses. Mme. R., one of her friends, and I were talking as a heavenly day was coming to a close. We had been in Paris, and were telling each other how pleased we each were to get back to the delightful solitude of Les Sablons.

"Do you know that perhaps, later on, your house will be a place of pilgrimage? People will know that Drumont lived there, and then. . . ."

"It is true," I said, "the places where celebrated men have lived inspire great thoughts and noble memories; the fame they leave has been well compared to precious essences perfuming the air where they evaporate."

"You are quite wrong," said Drumont suddenly—he had been listening to us, for we were sitting not far from his study. "Celebrated men are not generally born for the good of humanity; many of them are only celebrated in the way in which Sulla, Alcibiades, or Eostratus were."

"My dear, leave your enemies to say that sort of thing."

"Why? Why not say that the majority of men

cloak their vices with their talents? To be quite frank, I am not sure that it would not be better to bury their memory with them. For instance, I had talent, I have known fame. What happiness have I gained from it? I lived alone so as not to be influenced by other people's ideas, so that the world should not know what a wild creature I was; being unknown, I had far greater chances of success. I wrapped myself in mystery so that people should be more tempted to read what I wrote. And what has been the result? I have worn out my brain and have become almost blind trying to warn my country of the plots which were being made against her; she would not see it, and now to-day I am growing old amid the terrors of a frightful war, and people write to me: 'Ah! if we had only listened to you!' What is good? What is evil? Who can boast that he has done useful work? What celebrated man's death has been a loss to humanity?"

We made no reply to this outburst, and allowed the storm to blow over. My friends went away, and we were left alone.

* * * * *

June.—And now the Austrians are bombarding Venice.

"Dans Venise la rouge
Pas un bateau qui bouge,
Pas un pêcheur sur l'eau,
Pas un falot."

And it is like that once more . . . absolute darkness, silence, the Grand Canal deserted, and the town mute.

With all lights extinguished they await the advent of the incendiary aeroplane. Night casts its shroud over Venice and her fretwork of stone, in order to hide them from the enemy.

Oh, Venice! Venice! what will become of your marble palaces! Your marble stairs! Your marble columns through which a soft light filters into the corners of your wondrous halls, where so many love dramas have been played out. What would the ghosts of your fair patricians say, O Venice! if they returned and, leaning on their favourite loggias, saw on a sudden a star—a star that moved, that rose and fell; that came from east to west, and, finally finding its bearings, let fall from on high its murderous freight?

What will become of the Doge's palace and its frail colonnades? Of St. Mark's and its familiar pigeons?

Do these monsters, then, respect nothing? Venice, the dream of poets and lovers, is it possible that one day you will sink quivering and gasping into your dark canals! Thou who hast resisted time and come down to us in beauty and harmony, art thou to be slain by their barbarity? And thy gondolas—"Those mysterious little beings endued with a soul of beauty," as Maria Star so prettily says in her "Hommage à Venise"—those swift-gliding gondolas

which caress the water as they lightly skim over it, what will become of them in the fury of destruction which rules the world?

But no, Venice is a queen, Venice is sacred, she will escape the savage brutes who wish to destroy her.

* * * * *

June.—It has been raining for some days. Everything is melancholy and the war-news seems less good.

Muncho writes me hopeless, cheerless letters. The war dragging on like this depresses her terribly. Still another year of confinement for her father, another year without seeing her dear mother, and another year before she can be married. She has had a shred of happiness, though. She was able to send four or five lines to her mother, on a very large sheet of paper on which about twenty people had also written to their dear ones. If news is sent like this it reaches Germany, and via Germany comes back to Douai, since, alas! Douai being occupied by them, is declared to be German. If she can get an answer the little one will be very happy.

In what times we are living? Towards what sort of future are we moving?

"We were much happier at Vallery," said Drumont the other day.

"Oh, the materials for happiness are in ourselves, and we should have them here as much as there, if it were not for this war."

"You are right in so far as family happiness is concerned, but you must own that we should be less unhappy at Vallery even during this war; I mean we should suffer from the war in a different way."

"I don't quite follow you."

"Why, at Vallery there was a certain atmosphere which would harmonize with present events. Vallery has been besieged; the Condés held real councils of war there; and it is from there that the order for the massacre of the Protestants of Sens went forth. "Here Nature, gay, flowering, and tender, contrasts too painfully with our thoughts."

"Yes, you have always been fond of ruins."

"Well? It's natural at my age. I certainly enjoy wandering along barbicans, through postern gates and near keeps. The towers with their *machicoulis*, the dungeons, the ramparts piled one upon another like bank upon bank, cuirass upon cuirass, revive within me the memories of other days, which flow down from those walls hidden under nettles and ivy. Nothing dies that once has lived."

"How you used to enjoy dreaming in the Prairie des Chevaliers! I suspect you of being a descendant of the Crusaders."

"Ah yes! it's quite possible. I have drawn more than one subject for an article from that field. It was there that the great ladies of other days could see the knights break their lances and men fall upon the

sward. Those were the good old times of chivalry, when there were roofs on those crumbling walls, the sound of voices and the clanking of weapons, and less grass upon the stones. How many a heart encased in armour has beaten there with love and pain! Adorable white hands have trembled on those stones where the nettles grow, and the embroidered streamers of the great pointed headdresses fluttered in the wind which bent the nobles' plumes and has often blown the ends of my tie about."

"What a beautiful picture one could paint from your description! But what they did not see in those times are the sea-eagles, the screech-owls, the night-jars, the White Lady, and the whole flock of alarming nocturnal animals who have made their homes in the ruins, and whose cries go up at nightfall."

"But there is a poetry, and I had almost said a charm, in all those creatures which move by night."

"Ah no, that is going a little too far! and that miserable sort of vulture, 'le Grand Duc,' as they call it, that got into my son's room one night, and was seen flying away next morning, when we went in—do you remember?"

"I should think so. I even told you some very true things about your son on the strength of it. I told you that the apparition of this king of the air in his room was a wonderful augury of success for that other king of the air which Paul was to become.

And I was right. Your ' Grand Duc,' dear, is getting on and will do even better; he too is a king of space at times; the Boches regard him as a bird of prey when he hovers over them; and when he drops what he holds in his talons, they are mad with terror. Yes, once again I have been a true prophet."

The day was nearly over, and our conversation had made us forget the rain. I kept thinking of my " Grand Duc," as the Master calls him.

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June.—Life here goes on in the same eternal round, unreasoningly, like a spit. However, I was delighted at the return of my friend Rosouley to Paris.

She is a delightful little woman, Roumanian by birth. She managed at last, by a trick, to obtain a passport which allowed her to come through all the enemy countries, so as to reach France, where her husband has been waiting for her for nearly a year. She has a very strong character and is very frank, and I liked her at first sight, and since then it always gives us pleasure to meet.

In all the countries she passed through they were never tired of praising the French. The Austrians she talked to in the train said:

" Only the French count; as for the rest, not even the Russians make any difference."

And when some trains of German soldiers went past, and Rose exclaimed; " Look at those hideous

Boches; have you ever seen anything so ugly!" the Austrians repeated:

"Oh yes! the Boches really are ugly!"

All the towns she saw were full of life, and were not short of anything. In the hotels they only stick to the bread ration two days in the week, and that is simply as a precaution, not because they are short of it. My friend Rose was obliged to leave her little boy in Bucharest, which is a great grief to her, for he is a most adorable and adored infant. When one saw the charming mother walking along the Champs Élysées, holding her Pierre by the hand, one saw joy led by happiness.

Rose has promised to come and spend a few days with me. I shall be so pleased if she does. We shall be able to have some more of our delightful talks—alas! much tinged with sadness, but that is inevitable.

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June.—There has been much discussion as to whether the child of violence and crime should be allowed to be born, and then the question was suddenly dropped.

The editor of a review wrote to the Master on this subject:

"DEAR MASTER,

"Everyone is asking the agonizing question: 'Should the child of crime be born?' According to official reports there are far more of these unhappy

women than is generally believed. The Catholic priests and Protestant clergy are constantly obliged to decide one of the most delicate and difficult questions which the civilized conscience has had to face.

" It is absolutely imperative that an inquiry should be held by the moral and intellectual élite of France. Its conclusions would be of assistance to the actual victims or their husbands, fiancés, or relations, who are bewildered with grief.

" Thus to all the ills this horrible war has brought upon us, must be added the torturing anguish of the woman who says to herself, ' I am going to give birth to a German.' "

Have there ever been such sufferings? For my part I do not think it is possible to bring up such children in our families side by side with others whose fathers and uncles may have been killed by the Boches.

Certainly such a terrible position is unique.

In the meantime private letters from the front tell us that we are going forward slowly but continuously. The war will be long! If only its clarion voice and the cries of the dying could quell the small conspiracies and the plots which those out of office make against those in power!

What stuff are these men made of not to cast aside and stifle their hatred in the face of danger and under the fire of the enemy? What will their punishment be?

One often hears of shirkers—I came upon a regular swarm of them the other day. I went to the Home Office, and was shown into a huge room where about forty men were seated at a table, looking through piles of papers and handing them from one to the other, whilst other men were strolling about smoking and drawing Tommies' heads on the walls.

Apparently they were all people from places in the North which are in the enemy's hands, who came to Paris and asked to be provided for; they are influential people politically in their own part, so they have been given jobs—far away from the front, of course.

Paul has not written to me for a week.

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June.—A year has passed and my feelings are the same, and I am in the same surroundings. I was leaning on my window-sill last night before going to bed, and looking at the stars, whilst in the distance trains full of soldiers went by as they were doing nearly a year ago. When I lowered my eyes to the garden, I saw a star on the grass—it was a glowworm, and I remembered how Paul, when he was still a schoolboy, used to amuse himself on the terrace at St. Auge by putting glowworms in the hair of the girls and young women who were there. As I did a year ago, I tried to hear what the soldiers were singing as they went North, but at least I am no longer troubled by the awful thought, " I shall be obliged to leave every-

thing, my house, my pictures, my home—in short, all that I love, in order to go off at random so as to escape from the enemy."

At least in that respect we have progressed sufficiently to prevent them from reaching us, and this is thanks to the united efforts of the French people.

How those poor young men who are letting themselves be killed in the defence of our frontier deserve to be loved! What modest, silent, unknown sacrifices, without the hope of any reward or any crown, human or divine!

Sculptors call the iron frame which is inside a statue and supports it "the soul," and therefore the soldiers can call themselves the soul of France.

They have recovered certain traditions without which there would be no more armies, and they need fear no comparison with the regiments of other times, when the men held their arms to their sides and drilled with the precision of an automaton.

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July.—The roses are fading and the days are growing shorter.

Paul has written to me at last!

"DEAR MOTHER,

"At last I have made a flight by night! You cannot imagine anything more magnificent or thrilling or wonderfully beautiful. When we leave the brilliant

lights of the camp in order to go through the darkness of the air, and rise, such is the violence of one's sensations that I think if one did not grow calm as one went up one would die of it. And when the moon is shining it is like fairyland. The earth looks like a great black ball set with diamonds—these are the lights. I assure you, Mother, that the calm of the night is very beautiful, almost divine; the brilliance of the moon bathing us in its light, the occasional silence of the guns, which from mere shame on shining nights like these, are sometimes silent—everything combines to make us forget for a little the miseries of the present time.

"Then one has to come down again, racing through the shadows and the darkness, and the earth and the camp with its huge reflectors rises giddily to meet one. One slows down, planes gently, alights, and it is over—one is back from Paradise!

"But I'm talking too much. I haven't told you yet that I had a very fine report from my captain, and that as a reward I shall shortly pilot a Bréguet.

"In our squadron one can do nothing as an individual; it is always the squadron that is congratulated, and not the units who compose it. It will therefore be a pleasure to me to become an individual, and as such, given a good machine, I shall be able to make myself useful.

"My fiancée writes me very plucky letters, though

they are still full of anxiety as to her parents' fate. How painful it must be for her!

"Finally, dear Mother, I am well, and full of vigour and go. I have reached my sixth bombing expedition now, and hope to take part in many more.

"My best love.

"PAUL."

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July.—Mme. D. is putting up a convalescent. He is a Northerner, and is cold and reserved and speaks very little. He was wounded in four places, and only left the trench when he was hit for the fourth time.

He has plenty of character, and is very low-class. The other evening, when Mme. D. said to him: "You look sad, François; what is the matter?" he answered without mincing words: "I'm infernally bored here. Oh yes, I'm bored to death! I'd sooner be at the front. At least it's amusing in the trenches, and people don't talk about the war."

And when Mme. D. laughed and said: "Thank you, it is very nice of you to say so," he added: "You must not be offended; I should be just as bored whomever I was staying with."

Mme. D. told me this as an illustration of the moral of these splendid soldiers. They say, too, that it was a mistake to give leave, and that in several towns the police had to be employed to make the men on leave rejoin their regiments.

On Sunday, at the Gare du Nord, there was a train for the soldiers going back to the front after their four days' leave. And oh, it was heartrending to see the women, the mothers, and especially the children, tearing themselves away from those who were leaving them.

One group, consisting of a woman, her husband, and two children who were crying out, "Daddy, don't go away! Daddy, don't leave us!" was particularly sad.

The man was restless, agitated, and in great distress; large tears were rolling down his cheeks, and he could not tear himself away from his wife. He was kissing her madly wherever he could, on her eyes, her mouth, her neck, her hair, her hands; it was touching to a degree.

The woman, whom grief had turned to stone, and who was restrained by the presence of the crowd and the people looking at her, did not say a word, she let him do what he liked; she just stood there, frozen with despair, with her eyes gazing into space.

I shall never forget that picture. The convalescents at the Rosa Bonheur Hospital have also gone, and their places will be taken by new ones.

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July.—I have had the great pleasure of having my brother and my sister-in-law here, and our dear little Muncho.

In order to cheer her up, I took her for long walks

in the forest; we went to Saunois, and then to the Fairies' Lake, to Marlotte, and finally to Montigny. I managed to bring a smile back to her pretty face by talking to her untiringly of Paul, of their future, of the end of the war, of her parents and of all that disturbs and troubles her.

"Oh, my Paul! my Paul! If you only knew, Mother, how I love him!" And it was so delightful to me to hear this that I hugged her to thank her for saying it.

"From the day when I saw him from my window in Douai," she said to me, "I knew he was going to be everything in life to me. And when I answered the fifth or sixth letter he sent me by saying, 'What do you want me to do?' and immediately received these three words only, 'Be my wife,' I got such a shock that I sat for I don't know how long with those three words before me, feeling that in them indeed lay my destiny."

"And from that day, dear, you have had many cares and struggles, and had to face a great deal of opposition?"

"Yes, that's true. First of all the opposition of my parents, who were not acquainted with him, and knowing he was an airman would not hear of it.

"Then hour by hour and day by day my mother was at last won over and brought round to my side. And then the support of my Aunt Belle, who was

sorry to see me so miserable when Paul had to leave Douai. Finally our good-bye, the dreadful separation, and almost immediately afterwards the dear little letters full of tenderness, faith, and hope."

"And then, when Paul had made a position for himself in the world, and was able to present himself before your parents, who had at length been won over by your touching fidelity and love, the war, that terrible catastrophe, broke out and separated you from each other once more. But pluck up courage, dear; the war is nearing its end, your parents will be restored to you, and Paul too, and you will be all the happier for having paid dearly for your gladness."

"O Mother of Paul, if you knew how much good you do me when you talk to me like that! I want to bear up and be brave and strong, so that they may find me worthy of them."

So we used to talk in the peaceful evenings. The fair-haired girl, dressed in blue, sat beside me and opened her pure and loving little heart to me; she was anxious and yet comforted, and alternately shy and confiding with me, the mother of the man she loves.

And I thanked God from the bottom of my heart for having brought her here to give me a little comfort and filial affection, and make a sort of oasis in my sad life in which I could renew my strength.

* * * * *

August.—The wind has changed, and once more we hear the dull, distant roar of the German guns. It stirs our very vitals, and before the great drama which is unfolding itself over there I feel like an ant running about on the surface of the earth, maddened by the noise of the shells. On the top of all this it is raining, it is almost cold, and the sky is black. We shall soon be entering on the second year of the war, and we often talk about it with the Master. He does not think it will last the whole of this second year, and often says: "It will be over in November." But isn't that just to cheer me up?

I met a peasant refugee. He has come back from the front, where he was wounded, and after being in hospital for several months, is now at the Rosa Bonheur Hospital. He was storming at the Germans, and I said to him, chaffing, "What are you grousing at? They have left you your life." "Yes, that is true: they have left me my life, but they burnt my farm while I was fighting. My poor farm—my father had built it. My flocks and my house were both insured against hail . . . but who would have thought that, after all the taxes one has paid to have good soldiers, one ought to have taken out a policy against the Boches too! Now—I have nothing left. My wife and children have gone down south to some relatives—such catastrophes are worse than death, I can tell you. And so there are moments when I am terribly tired

of this life of inaction; and I want to get away, and kill them . . . kill them . . ."

Miss K. and I listened to this worthy soldier, with his mild, hang-dog face; and we were intensely surprised to hear him utter his thirst for revenge and slaughter. Oh, this war which devastates countries, and breaks up all sense of community in men . . . how horrible it is!

* * * * *

August.—Here I will end the first part of my war diary. I cannot tell how much the censor may take it into his head to delete, but whatever is removed from this collection of my thoughts and feelings will appear in the second volume, which will not be published until after the war, and consequently will contain far more interesting stories, correspondence, facts, anecdotes, and letters, since then one will be able to say everything.

I have related facts quite simply. I have depicted those around me or those who wrote to me as I saw them, with their tender love devoid of sentimentality, which is the gift of genuine youth and eternal freshness.

This freshness of feeling, this delicate tendency to emotion, which I have so often noticed in our sons, in our wounded soldiers, and in the common people of France, has often consoled me and given me courage in the course of this long and painful year.

With souls like these, I thought, one cannot fail to win.

I should like to finish the book with a thought of the Master's, since it was under his protection that it was begun.

We were talking one day before Drumont of the part the aristocracy were playing in this war, and were complaining that it was not a sufficiently conspicuous one.

Drumont answered: "The real nobles of days of yore who defended their native land, and used their elbows to prevent the stranger usurping the place belonging to the sons of France; who disturbed the order of battle, so as to be the first to charge, are no more; one may look in vain for them among their descendants.

"'Do not eclipse me; I wish to be seen!' cried Francis I. at Marignan, as he thrust aside those who stood before him. That was finer than the Comte d'Artois playing whist with Madame de Polastron, while the Chouans were letting themselves be killed for him . . . more royal than the cruises of the French princes, when the storm rumbled and the war broke out.

"Look you, it is only the plebeians now who are so sturdy and so brave. The dispute between the men on foot and the cavaliers continues; but it is the man on foot who is now in the first rank.

"The descendants of those dapper nobles of old are now for the most part on terms of intimacy with

all the Mardochée, and all the Jews in creation. They leave to the People the sacred right of being killed in defence of their country. . . . And so the People rise to superhuman heights, because they have never been mastered by an excessive love of well-being, nor by the perpetual anxiety regarding all that might interfere with the even tenor of their way.

"The old order changeth. . . . Another which as yet we do not see will rise out of this present jumble. Let us wait in hope and faith."

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